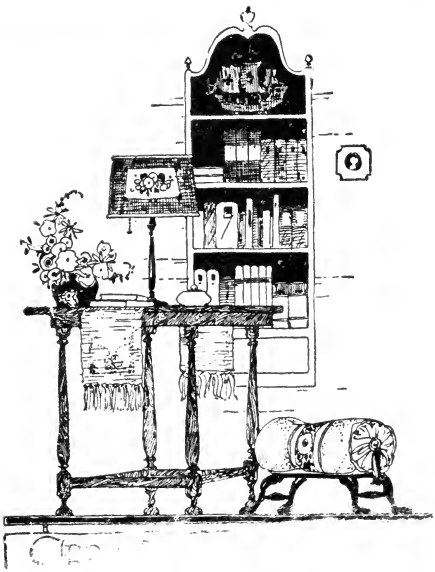
HOW IT CAME ABOUT STORIES

FRANK B. LINDERMAN
Illustrated by CARLE MICHEL BOOG



BY FRANK B. LINDERMAN

HOW IT CAME ABOUT STORIES

INDIAN *OLD*-MAN STORIES
More Sparks from War Eagle's Lodge-Fire

INDIAN WHY STORIES
Sparks from War Eagle's Lodge-Fire

BUNCH-GRASS AND BLUE-JOINT

ON A PASSING FRONTIER
Sketches from the Northwest

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

HOW IT CAME ABOUT STORIES

"Well, they don't bother me very much," laughed the Weasel

HOW IT CAME ABOUT STORIES

By

FRANK B. LINDERMAN

[CO-SKEE-SEE-CO-COT]

Illustrated by

CARLE MICHEL BOOG

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1921

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THE SCRIBNER PRESS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO MY DAUGHTERS

WILDA, VERNE, AND NORMA

WHO HAVE LEARNED TO LISTEN IN THE STILL PLACES
AND WHO HAVE ENJOYED THESE PAGES
IN THEIR MAKING

FRANK B. LINDERMAN

From the land where yet the tepee
Mingles smoke with evening's haze,
And the antlered elk is monarch
Of the silent forest ways;
Where the trail in seeming fondness,
To the river ever clings,
And Nature whispers "silence"
When the water-ouzel sings.

FOREWORD

THESE stories should not be confounded with *Indian Why Stories* nor with *Indian Old-man Stories*, as they are altogether imaginary, and are told in the hope of entertaining young Americans and interesting them in the strange habits of our wild animals and birds.

I have assumed that the animals, speaking at the Council-fire, accept *Old*-man as their Creator, as does the Redman of the forest and plains, and have used him accordingly.

I believe in the cultivation of appreciation for the work and beauties of nature as a firm foundation for better citizenship. Such appreciation is a special grace — a favor that is the real parent of every noble impulse. It may be cultivated, and when once attained is never lost. Its rewards are immediate and far-reach-

ing. It is the only real paymaster — the just judge of compensation.

It lends a sweeter softness to the ouzel's morning song;
It emphasizes virtue and it magnifies a wrong;
It makes your fellows love you; it makes you want to live —
This grace, if nature gives it, is the best she has to give.

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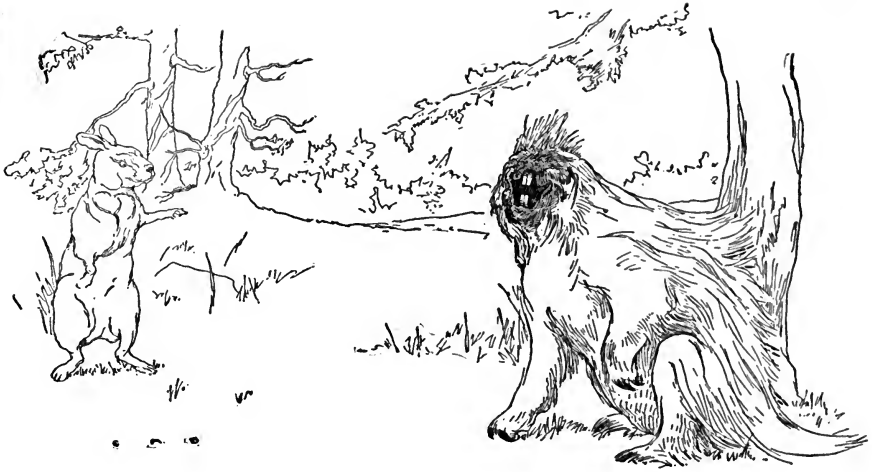

BOOK I

AT THE BIG LAKE WHEN THE MOON IS FULL

CHAPTER I

ONCE, ever so long ago, this world was new. That is, it was lots newer than it is to-day, and the animals and birds that lived in the forests and upon the plains used to meet and talk about their habits and peculiarities. They never told how they came by them, however, and always excused themselves from answering direct questions concerning them. This secrecy made their neighbors and friends wonder the more. The Wolf, meeting the Bear, would ask him what had become of his tail, and the Blue-grouse, coming down to the lowlands to build her nest in the springtime, wondered why her cousin, the Sage-hen, had no gizzard as did other birds of their kind. And so it went on until one day the Bear met the Weasel in a cedar swamp in the springtime.

"Say, my little brother," said the Bear,

"that old white robe of yours looks rather ragged — almost as ragged as my own."

"Yes, it does," admitted the Weasel. "I 'm turning brown now. It will soon be summer, and if I were to wear my winter robe of white, anybody could see me in the woods. I 'm afraid of Owls, anyhow. I 'll be glad when I 'm brown again."

"You are hard to see in the winter-time," said the Bear.

"Yes, and that 's because I 'm white, you see. I 'm just as hard to see in summer when I have changed my coat to brown," laughed the Weasel.

"I wonder why we have so much winter, anyhow," mused the Bear, as he scratched his ear with his hind paw.

"Well, I have heard that the Muskrat knew, but he has never told me," replied the Weasel. "I don't mind the winter, and you ought not to dislike it. You sleep all the time, while I have to make my living in the snow, small as I am."

"It doesn't take much to make you fat," returned the Bear. "One mouthful for me would make a feast for you for a month. Think of that! It takes a lot of food to make me fat. It is well for me that I can sleep in the winter, for my legs are too short for the deep snows. Besides, I am so heavy that I 'd sink out of sight in the snow-drifts. You can skip along over them like a light breeze, and a mouthful of food is a big feast for you. I think you are favored, myself."

"Humph!" sniffed the Weasel. "I wish *I* could curl up where it 's warm and do nothing but sleep through the cold weather. But if I tried it, I 'd starve to death, that 's all. I have to work, work, work all the time to keep alive while you sleep, sleep, sleep."

"Heigh-ho!" sighed the Bear. "*Old*-man made us all. I wonder why he did such queer things for us. Here you are so tiny and I am so large and strong. Then there 's the Beaver. He can stay under water quite a while, and yet

he is no relation to the Fish-people that live in the water. I can't stay under water at all. I can swim, of course; but a Fish cannot walk on the land as I do. He dies in the air. I wonder why, don't you? The Duck-people can swim in the water, fly in the air, walk on the land, and stay under water a long time. Some people had a great many favors given them, I think."

"You know why you are made to sleep in the winter-time, and I know why I change my coat with the seasons. I suppose the rest of our kind know why *Old*-man made them as he did, so that is all that is necessary, I should think," said the Weasel.

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed the Bear. "But I, for one, would like to hear them tell their stories. Let us call a Council of all the animals and birds. Let it be held at the Big Lake where the forest reaches to the waters, so that those who live in the streams can be there with us."

"That's a good idea," declared the Weasel.

"A mighty good idea. It would help to pass the summer, too."

"We will do it," decided the Bear. "You tell everybody you see, and I will do the same thing. Let us set the day now. When the moon is full next time would be fine, I think. Tell everybody that there will be no quarrelling, and that the Council will last for four days and four nights. That will give every one a chance to tell about himself."

"All right," agreed the Weasel. "I see lots of people. I 'll have work telling the Mouse-people and the Rabbits, I suppose, for they are afraid of me."

"I don't blame them," laughed the Bear. "But tell all you see, and begin now. I have to be going. It 's getting late. I 'll tell the Wolf to-night. We are not very good friends, but I can manage it, I guess." Then he went on digging roots and looking for forest-people that he might tell them of the coming Council by the Big Lake.

The Weasel watched him from a fallen tree. "You clumsy, bob-tailed, big-footed lout," he whispered. "I 'd hate to have to carry so much of a body about. It must keep you busy to put any fat on your ribs." Then he began to hunt for a bird's nest that he might suck the eggs.

"If I were as small as that Weasel-person, I 'd be afraid some one would step on me," mused the Bear, as he dug and ate the root of camas that grew in a meadow-place. "His head is larger around than his body, and his tail — well, it 's nearly as long as himself. . . . There goes the Wolf now! Hey, Brother Wolf, wait a minute!"

The Wolf stopped. "I suppose you want something," he snarled as the Bear came through some bushes, cracking the dead branches under foot with his great weight.

"I do and I don't," said the Bear.

"You do and you don't, hey?" said the Wolf as he put his front feet upon a log. "Well, I

don't understand that at all. You don't look as mean as you are. I guess it's your stub tail that makes you look so funny. How does it happen that a big person like you wears so short a tail?"

"Now, that is what I wanted to talk to you about," said the Bear. "You see, I have wondered why it is that you can see so well. I don't see half as much as you do. My nose is fine, though. Nobody can smell any better than I, but I don't see so very well, even in the daytime. Now, all the animal people have peculiarities that are strange to those who do not possess them, so I — that is, the Weasel and I — have decided to call a Council at the Big Lake when the moon is full next time. There will be no quarrelling, and each animal there will be expected to tell how and why he came by the peculiarities he possesses — see? It will be great sport, and we shall hear many stories that we can tell to our grandchildren when we are old. Will you come?"

"Yes, of course I 'll come," said the Wolf, "but I 'll have to bring my wife."

"That 's all right. I 'm going to bring my wife, too," said the Bear. "Besides that, I 'll have to bring the children."

"You have only two, while I have five children," said the Wolf, "but I can't leave them at home for four days and nights."

"Of course you can't. Bring them along. And tell everybody you see, will you?"

"Yes," said the Wolf. "I 'll tell everybody I find. Good-by." And he trotted away with his nose to the breeze, leaving the Bear standing by the log.

"That Wolf-person smells something to eat, I suppose," mused the Bear, as he watched the Wolf trotting away in a straight line through the forest. "The sun is getting low. I suppose I 'd better be moving toward the hills."

He began to follow a deer trail toward the foot-hills. His head was swinging from side to side as he lumbered along the way, when

"Whew! Whew! Whew!" a white-tail Deer whistled in the bushes ahead of him.

"That 's the Deer," said the Bear. "I don't suppose he will wait. He has smelled me and will run. Oh, Brother Deer!" he called.

"Oh, I see you," said the Deer.

"Well, I don't see you," said the Bear.

"I know you don't. I 've always wondered why your eyes are not better and ——"

"That 's just what I wanted to talk to you about," said the Bear. "I have wondered why you have no gall sack on your liver. Your cousin, the Antelope, has a gall sack but no dew-claws. You have dew-claws, you know. *Old*-man made us all, but in his making he did many strange things, so I — that is, the Weasel, the Wolf, and I — have decided to call a Council so that each animal may tell his story. It 's to be held at the Big Lake, where the timber reaches to the water, so the Fish-people can be there if they want to."

"When is that to be?" asked the Deer.

"When the moon is full next time. Will you come?"

"Yes, but don't keep edging up to me that way. I don't trust you very much," said the Deer.

"I won't harm you," said the Bear. "And there is to be no quarrelling at the Council. Will you tell everybody you see?"

"I will. Who is going to tell the Fish-people?"

"Oh, I 'll get the Beaver to do that. He sees a good many Fish every day," said the Bear. "But I don't expect many of the Fish-people. I 'm glad you like the idea of the Council, and don't forget the time."

"I won't. But say, I don't want to be in the sun too much from now until August. My horns are in the velvet and soft. I have to stay in the shade so they will grow and not harden."

"Oh, it will be shady at the lake," said the Bear. "Good-by. And tell everybody."

"All right. It looks like rain, doesn't it?"

"Um-hu. Hope it does rain," said the Bear. "It makes digging lots easier."

The sun was nearly down now. The shadows were long across the deer trail, as the Bear pursued his way toward the foot-hills. "I wonder how the Weasel is getting along," he mused. "Everybody I have asked is going to come. I am anxious to hear what they have to say, too. Hello! there 's the Weasel now. Oh, Weasel — say!" cried the Bear.

"Good land!" said the Weasel. "Do you suppose I didn't see you? I 've been listening to your footsteps for a long time, and I 've been waiting for you. I 've seen a lot of people about that Council and they are all coming — all but the Rabbit. He says he will have nothing to do with us. He says he has more enemies than anybody else, and that it keeps him busy to stay alive. Why, he wouldn't let me get near enough to talk to him without yelling. He 's an awful coward."

"I know he is," said the Bear. "But you can't blame him. Everybody that eats meat is after him. I wouldn't trust you myself if I were the Rabbit, but I 'll get the Pine Squirrel to talk to him. I 'd like to get the Rabbit to the Council because of his tail. I 'd like to know how he came by it, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would, but, good land, I wasn't thinking of killing him when I was asking him to a party," said the Weasel.

"No, I suppose not, but you 're pretty cunning and would do anything to get hot blood."

"What 's that! Do you mean to say ——"

"Now, now, brother! I meant no harm. I was just excusing the poor Rabbit, that 's all. Forgive me if my words angered you."

"Well, they did," said the Weasel.

"Who else did you see besides the Rabbit?" asked the Bear, changing the subject.

"Oh, I saw the Mice-people and the Chipmunk and the Grouse and the Magpie. That Magpie-person never takes anything seriously.

He laughed and jabbered and made fun of the Council — a liars' convention, he called it. That made me angry, and so I told him no gathering of liars would be complete without his presence. Instead of being insulted, he said all right, he 'd be there, and that talent was at a premium anywhere. A robin was calling him everything she could think of while we were talking. He had sucked every egg in her nest. My! she was good and angry. But, of course, the Magpie 'll be on hand. You couldn't keep him away if you tried. Who did *you* see?"

"I saw the Wolf and the Deer," said the Bear. "They will come. Both will tell everybody they see. They travel a great deal and so see many people. Our Council will be a great success, I know."

"I think so, myself," said the Weasel. "I am glad you thought of it. That Chipmunk-person's clothes are strange. I wonder how he came by them."

"I don't know," said the Bear slowly. "Some people say that I scratched him, and so made those marks on his back, but that 's not true. I hope he comes to the Council. I 'd like to hear him tell about his clothes."

"Oh, he 'll come, all right. No use asking the Flies and Mosquitoes, is there?"

"No, goodness, no! Don't say a word to them about it. We should have thought of it before this, because somebody might ask them to come. There isn't a single thing that I want to know about those people. I wish *Old*-man had not made them," said the Bear, in disgust.

"Well, they don't bother me very much," laughed the Weasel.

"No, I suppose not, and they don't harm me as much as they do some people. The Deer can't stand still when those Fly-people are around. I do hope they don't learn of the Council until it 's too late for them to get there. Well, I must be going. I want to cross the mountains to-night. Good-by."

"That 's a long way for a slow traveller," said the Weasel.

"Yes, but I can make it. I shall pass the place where the Beaver-person is working, to-night. He is messing up a lot of country, too. That Beaver-person would make a lake of the whole world if he could, I guess."

"I like him," declared the Weasel.

"Oh, so do I — so do I," the Bear hastened to say. "He 's a person that minds his own business and harms nobody. If it weren't for his old dams and ponds and mud-holes, I should find no fault with him. But he likes mud and knows how to make it. He works hard all the time and never eats meat. I don't see how he can do it. Well, I surely must be going. Good-by."

"Good-by till the Full of the Moon," called the Weasel, and hopped upon a log.

The Bear turned and was quite a way along the deer trail when the Weasel cried, "Say! say! shall I invite the Skunk-person if I see him?"

"Why, yes, of course. Why not?"

"Oh, nothing; but when he doesn't behave I don't like to sit near him, that 's all."

"He 'll behave," called back the Bear. "He 'll behave, and I 'd give anything to know how he came by that awful smell. . . . Well, my goodness! If we don't stop talking I 'll never get where I 'm going. Be sure and tell everybody there is to be no quarrelling at the Council. Tell them that I 'll see to it that there will be order there for four days and four nights. After that the weak ones will be given from sun-up to sun-down in which to hide. Then everything will be as before, except that we shall know some good stories to tell our grandchildren. Good-by!"

"Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay! Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!"

The deep sounds came from a dark thicket of fir-trees ahead of the Bear. It was night. He had talked a great deal and had not noticed the darkness coming into the forest.

"Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay! Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!"

"That 's the Owl-person," mused the Bear, as he climbed over a dead tree on the ground. "That 's the Owl-person, and he is speaking Piegan to-night. I 'll tell him about the Council, even if I am late."

"Say, Owl-person," he called.

"Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" The Owl paid no attention to the Bear. He pretended he did not see him and kept calling: "Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" until the Bear was under the tree where he sat, with his big, round eyes peering into the night.

"Say, Owl-person, I want to talk to you, if you will stop that noise. You are speaking Piegan. You are saying that the Ghost-people are abroad, but I don't believe in ghosts, so you needn't try to make me believe you are a dead person. Now, listen! The Wolf, the Deer, the Weasel, and I, and a lot of us have decided to call a Council at the Big Lake, where

the forest reaches to the water's edge, so the Fish-people may come if they choose. You know that we all have peculiar traits, and some of us do funny things. You sleep in the daytime and hunt at night. All other people sleep while you wake the Echo-people from their beds with your voice. I 'd like to know why, and I suppose you would like to know how it came that my tail is so short."

"Yes, I would," admitted the Owl. "You don't appear to be all there with so short a tail. I 've often noticed it. Coog — Coog-a-noots — — Sto-kay!"

"Oh, keep quiet," growled the Bear.

"Well, I have to answer that fellow, don't I?" said the Owl. "What makes you so cross? Hear him?"

"Yes, I hear him, but can't you finish talking before you hoot any more?"

"When is the Council to be?"

"When the moon is full next time."

"Why the moon?" asked the Owl. "The

darker it is the better I like it. Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!"

"There you go again," growled the Bear.

"Well, I have to," said the Owl. "You don't know our rules. I 'm doing the best I can. I 'll come to your Council, if that 's what you want."

"That is what I want, but tell everybody you see, will you? Tell them all, except the Fly-people and the Mosquitoes. They bother some people terribly, and they don't know anything worth telling. You 'll tell everybody, will you?"

"Yes. Excuse me a moment. Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay! I couldn't help it. It 's a law. That fellow has called twice now, but I 'll be at the Council. Besides, I 'll tell everybody I see, though I don't see many people. Everybody is asleep when I am out, but I 'll do the best I can. There 's that fellow again. Excuse me. Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" But the Bear had left in disgust.

"I don't care a snap if that noisy person

stays away from the Council altogether," he snarled, as he pulled a small stick from between his toes. "'Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay,'" he said. "What a lie! He is not a Ghost-person. I wonder if the Piegans know he is using their language to tell lies in the night." Then he began to climb the mountain, wishing he owned the Owl's eyes to see in the dark.

Up, up climbed the Bear — far up on the high mountains until he came to the snow upon their tops. "Ha!" he cried. "This feels good to my feet." Then he rolled in the snow and ate great mouthfuls of it, for he was thirsty after his climb. "I 'll soon be going down the hill now," he laughed, as he shook himself to free his coat from the snow that had stuck to it. "I like it up here, but there 's more to eat down lower. The berries will soon be ripe along the streams. Then I shall feast every day, as long as they last. I like the summer-time best, even if I do sleep all winter. Sleeping so much gets to be an old story. Why, I

wear the fur off my coat lying around so long as I have to. I guess that Weasel-person wouldn't like it so well as he thinks he would. Well, here I go down the mountain."

The moon was up. It was a very bright moon, and its light fell along the deer trail that led down the mountain-side to the river, passing close to where the Beaver was at work in a grove of quaking-aspens. A tree fell just as the Bear reached the place, and he stopped near the top of it. He kept quiet for a moment, watching the Beaver, who stood still after the tree had fallen with a bang, to see if anybody was near. But not seeing the Bear, he had commenced to work again when the Bear spoke. "Hello!" he said. "Do you work all the time?"

"I have to," replied the Beaver. "Where are you going?"

"Down to the river. I have business down there. Besides, I wanted to see you," the Bear answered.

"What do you want to see me about?"

"Well, you see, the Weasel and I — that is, the Weasel, and the Deer, and the Wolf, and I, and a lot more of us want to hold a Council near the Big Lake, where the forest reaches to the water."

"What for?" asked the Beaver, as he cut a white chip from a big limb of the tree he had felled.

"Oh, to begin with," said the Bear, "the Weasel and I got to talking and wondering how the Animal-people and the Bird-people came to possess so many peculiarities. We wondered why *Old*-man made them as he did, and we thought it would be well to meet and let each one tell How It Came About — how he came to possess the strange powers that differ from those of others, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said the Beaver. "But I know some folks that might not want to tell. That Skunk-person, for instance. I suppose he is ashamed of the smell he makes in the forest."

"No, I don't believe he is," declared the Bear. "And, anyway, it was given him by *Old*-man, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but I 'm glad he gave it to him and not to me."

"So am I, Brother Beaver. But you have a smell too, remember."

"Smell! Smell! Of course I have a smell, but it isn't a bad smell. It 's a sweet smell. Why, there isn't any sweeter perfume than my musk, and you know it."

"Well, I must say that I like it much better than that of the Skunk-person, but perhaps he thinks his musk is sweeter than yours," said the Bear.

"I know he doesn't!" declared the Beaver. "That person never uses his musk unless he is angry or afraid. He knows that other people do not like it. The Skunk is a mean person. Why, I have known him to quarrel with others near my lodge, and I 've even had to move afterward."

"Oh, well," said the Bear. "I wasn't defending the Skunk, but let us hold the Council and hear him tell how he came by that smell. There will be no quarrelling. That 's understood. I shall keep order myself. No one need be afraid of his enemies while the Council is in session, and when it is over time shall be given in which the weak ones may hide. We 'll make it from sunup to sundown. After that everything will be as before."

"A lot of you meat-eaters will be hungry if you have to wait that long between meals," laughed the Beaver, "but I shan't mind it at all. The bark of the quaking-aspen, or the willow, or the cottonwood supplies my needs. I can find it any place where there is water."

"Well, you were made that way," said the Bear. "Look at your teeth. Nobody has teeth like yours. Will you come to the Council?"

"When is it to be held?"

"When the moon is full next time."

"Yes, I 'll come, but I have a lot to do. The water is going to be low this year. I shall have to finish this dam before the snows melt in the mountains."

"There is plenty of water always," said the Bear. "If there is not enough water here, why don't you go where there 's more?"

"Because I like it here. I can make a nice dam right here, easy. The bark on the trees around this place is sweeter than anywhere I know. It 's my home, and my children are small."

"Say, Brother Beaver, can you tell the Fish-people about the Council?" asked the Bear.

"I don't see many Fish here," returned the Beaver. "You 'd better get the Otter to tell them. He follows them up the streams and down again. Wherever they go, there you 'll find him. There 's another mean person. He loves to quarrel with me, and I don't like quarrelling. Why, he even comes into my lodge and fights with me sometimes. He is a greater

warrior than I am, and I always get the worst of it when we fight."

"I hadn't thought of the Otter-person," said the Bear. "Will you speak to him for me?"

"No, sir. If I tried to talk to him he 'd think I was looking for a row. No, sir, I 'll not hold any conversation with that person, at all. I might see the Mink. He was here to-day. I see him quite often. There 's another person with a bad smell, that Mink-person."

"Well, I 'll look for the Otter myself," said the Bear, "and you tell the Mink about the Council. Get him to tell the Marten too. I 'll attend to inviting the Mountain Lion, and the Lynx, and all the Cat-family. Don't forget the date. My! but you are making it wet and muddy around here."

"That 's the way I like it," retorted the Beaver.

"Good-by," said the Bear. "I must be on my way."

"Good-by," said the Beaver. "That tree fell

right across the deer trail, but I guess you can climb over it all right."

The Bear went on and the Beaver began to cut all the limbs from the tree. "Humph!" he said, "I invite that Otter-person!" The thought angered him, and the white chips fell to the ground at each bite of the long, curved brown teeth. "Why, I wouldn't think of speaking to that Otter-person. Just because a person lives in the water is no sign that I like him. I don't care much for the Council anyhow. I have too much work to do, but I have said I 'd go, and I will."

Just then the Mink ran along the edge of the little lake the Beaver was making with his dam.

"Come here a minute," called the Beaver.

The Mink came to the tree. "You are always working, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I have to," replied the Beaver. "What I wanted to tell you is this: there is to be a Council at the Big Lake when the moon is full next time. All the Animal-people and the

Bird-people are invited. The Bear has been here and told me. Will you come?"

"You say that all the people will be there?"

"That 's what 's intended," replied the Beaver.

"Do they know that I am invited?" asked the Mink.

"Of course," said the Beaver. "Why?"

"Well, I 'll bet they won't come if they hear that I 'll be there — that is, not all of them."

"You haven't told me why yet, Brother Mink."

"You know why," returned the Mink.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that the Bear said that there would be no quarrelling, and that he would keep order. Plenty of time will be given for the weak ones to hide — from sunup to sundown, after the Council is over."

"Oh," said the Mink, "that 's different."

"Will you come?" asked the Beaver.

"Yes; and if I see the Marten, shall I ask him? He 's a nice person, the Marten."

"I wish you would," said the Beaver. "That was all I had to say to you, and I am busy. I 've got a lot to do."

"Well, you are a cool one, I must say," declared the Mink, backing away. "Ask a person to come and talk to you — a person who is minding his own business — ask him to a party and then tell him to move on."

"I didn't intend to be rude," the Beaver objected. "I am going to that Council myself, and must get this dam built before the snows melt in the mountains. Pardon my seeming rudeness, Brother Mink."

"Humph!" said the Mink to himself as he ran through a hollow log, looking for a sleeping Rabbit or a Mouse, "I 'd hate to be so busy that I couldn't talk to my friends. Besides, I 'd hate to have to wear a tail like the Beaver's. He 's an awful homely person, but he 's smart — smarter than the rest of us, I guess."

It was daylight when the Bear reached the

river that ran through the beautiful valley near the foot of the mountains. Just as he came to the level land he found an Ant-hill. "Here 's my breakfast!" he cried, and stirred the Ant-hill with his paw. The Ants, disturbed, began to swarm about their damaged home, and the Bear licked them up with his tongue by the hundreds. He turned over stones too, and ate the Bugs that ran out from their hiding-places. Once in a while he surprised a sleeping Mouse and put his paw upon it before he swallowed it. "I 've seen a lot of people," he said, as he found a good place for a nap. "I know the Council will be a success. Everybody I have seen is coming, and each one will invite every one else. I don't think I need travel much more. The people will all get an invitation, for such news spreads rapidly. Heigh-ho! I 'm sleepy."

He lay down with a great sigh, and was soon fast asleep. A black Bug crawled out on a willow limb, wabbling and staggering as though

the bark were slippery, then fell plump! upon the Bear's back. A tiny Bird saw the Bug fall, and in the twinkling of an eye he had lit on the Bear's back, caught the Bug that was tumbling in the fur there, and flown back to a tree near by. But the Bear did not feel either the Bug or the Bird, for he was dreaming of the coming Council at the Big Lake when the moon was full.

On the other side of the mountain the Weasel had travelled far and wide. At last he came to his own lodge and went inside. "My, but I 'm tired," he said to his wife. "I 've seen lots of people and they are coming to the Council; every one except the Rabbit, and the Bear says he can manage him. I guess with every one travelling and inviting folks there will be a big crowd at the Big Lake when the moon is full next time." Then he went to sleep, as the Bear had done over the mountain.

When the Bear awoke he found more mice and ants along the river, and as he travelled he

invited people to the Council. At last he met the Porcupine and asked him to be sure and come, but the Porcupine said: "Why, the Weasel told me about it, and I promised him I 'd be there."

"Well, if that 's the case," said the Bear, "I guess everybody 's been invited. I won't look for any more people." And he didn't. If he met any one he asked him if he were going to the Big Lake when the moon was full, and every one said "Yes." So every one knew about it.

It looked as though the weather would be bad when the moon was full. At daylight the morning before the Woodpecker poked his head out of a hole in a tree and looked at the sky. "It 's cloudy," he said. "Mercy! I hope it won't rain."

The Bear had been at the Big Lake all night. He looked at the sky when the morning was coming into the forest, and said to the Weasel, who had just arrived: "There are clouds in the

sky, but I think they will go away. I 'm glad you have come. There is a lot to do here." He began to gather wood for the Council-fire, and to pile it near the water on the sandy shore of the lake. "We won't light the fire until night," he said. "But it will take a lot of wood when the fire is burning. You can gather kindling. Get some birch bark — that 's the best. It always burns, wet or dry."

All day the Bear and Weasel worked gathering wood and kindling and cleaning up the Council Ground, near the spot where they intended to build the fire when night came. The place was beautiful. The big trees grew close to the water, and thick green bushes were scattered about as though they had been planted for the occasion. There was just one stone on the sandy beach, and that was a large one near the spot that had been selected for the fire.

It was late in the afternoon and the forest was still, when the Bear and the Weasel took a nap in the shade of the trees. The sky had

cleared and the weather was fine. "Don't let me sleep too late," said the Bear. "We must have the fire going before the moon comes."

"All right," said the Weasel. "But I 'm pretty tired."

He curled up in the fur on the Bear's back, and in a minute both were sleeping. Hours went by. The Shadow-people crept out of the forest and played about the sleeping pair under the trees. Then they went out on the rippling waters of the Big Lake and danced in glee. Still the Bear and the Weasel slept. Darkness came, and the Shadow-people ran away. The wind stirred the leaves. And then there were low voices in the bushes about the spot where the Council was to be held. "There's nobody here," whispered the Mouse to the Chipmunk, who had just arrived.

Then a stick cracked just back of them, and both scampered away and hid themselves. "What was that?" gasped the Mouse.

"Sounded like the Wolf to me," said the Chipmunk. "I don't think I shall stay around here long."

Right over their heads there came the sound of tramping feet. "That 's the Deer," said the Chipmunk. "I know his footsteps. They are all coming, it seems, but where 's the fire, I wonder?"

"Maybe they have changed the date, or something," suggested the Mouse. "The moon is coming and there is no fire."

Many pairs of fiery eyes peered through the bushes at the pile of wood the Bear had gathered. All wondered at the silence, but none ventured out of the bushes. The trees were full of birds overhead, and once in a while a dry stick would crack under the feet of some heavy person on the ground, but every one was waiting to see what was the matter, when "OOOOUUUUuuuuuu! OOOOUUUUuuuuuu!" howled the Wolf, as the full moon came into the sky. "OOOOUUUUuuuuu!"

"My!" said the Mouse.

"That 's a dreadful voice!" said the Chipmunk, and shivered.

It made nearly every one nervous, but not one ran away.

"What 's that! Say, what 's that!" The Bear sat up and the Weasel fell from his back. "You 're a fine one!" growled the Bear. "You 've let me sleep too long. There 's the full moon and nobody 's here. Help me make the fire, quick!"

"There they are," whispered the Chipmunk, as the tiny flame the Bear had started began to grow and crackle among the dry sticks and birch bark. "There they are."

There was a buzz of voices in the bushes, and the Wolf walked toward the growing fire and spoke to the Bear. "How, how, my brother!" greeted the Bear. "Are many here?"

"The brush is full of people," declared the Wolf. "I saw a lot of them as I came along. They were wondering where you were."

"I was asleep. I 'll confess it. I was asleep," said the Bear, with a sour look at the Weasel. Then he called: "Come, everybody! Come out of the bushes. I will see that there is no quarrelling here. The Wolf will help me to keep order, won't you, Brother Wolf?"

"Yes, I will," said the Wolf. "I intend to behave, myself, and we will see that the rest behave, too."

There was a stir in the bushes, and finally the Porcupine shuffled toward the fire.

"Oh, of course he isn't afraid," whispered the Chipmunk behind his hand. "His quills protect him."

But others followed, and in a few minutes a great semicircle had formed near the fire. There was much changing of positions, though. For the Mouse didn't like the Weasel, and the Rabbit (who had finally come) despised the Bob-cat.

"Why, my goodness! I won't hurt you," said the Lynx-person to the Grouse.

"I know you won't, but I just don't like you, that's all," replied the Grouse, moving away.

But at last they were quiet.

CHAPTER II

THE Bear stood near the fire and spoke to them. He told them what the Council was for, and said that they must all go hungry while the meeting was being held. "I 'll take the life of any one here who quarrels with his friends or enemies about this fire. We have come here to learn — not to fight," he declared. Then he put more wood upon the fire, and the light fell on the water of the Big Lake. Fishes stuck their heads up for a moment and spoke a word or two. One, who seemed to be a chief, said that the Fish-people were there to look and listen. "If," he said, "we can help any we will do it, but we can't live out there by the fire. We have our enemies and they do not all live in the water. I guess that everybody has his enemies, though. That is all I have to say. I 'm out of breath."

As the Chief-fish finished speaking the Turtle

crawled out of the Big Lake and waddled toward the Council. The firelight shone on his smooth, wet back as he crossed the sandy beach toward the Bear, who cried, "Welcome, Brother Turtle — you who live in the water and on the land — welcome!"

The Turtle found a place not too close to the fire, where he stopped and blinked at the blaze in wonder.

Then the Bear sang his war-song and danced about the fire, crying: "The Council is open! The Council is open! All will behave. I am the Big Chief here. The Wolf is also a Chief and will help me to keep order while we are here. Let all take heed lest they get into trouble. I will now call on the Skunk to tell us how he came to possess the smell that makes his friends wonder and his enemies afraid. Listen to the Skunk-person."

The Skunk stepped out into the firelight, and there was a murmur among the people as he climbed upon the big rock near the fire.

The Council

"Silence!" commanded the Bear, and the murmuring ceased at once.

"Oh, Chief of the Council," began the Skunk. "Oh, Chief of the Council and all assembled, listen! My robe of black-and-white and my smell were given to me by *Old*-man for service rendered him in time of need. Once I was plain to look upon. Now I am beautiful — more beautiful than any of you. Once I had no weapon of defense save my teeth. Now I can put my enemies to flight by making a smell. I could break up this Council if —— "

"Oh, don't do it! Don't!" cried a dozen voices in fright.

"I don't intend to," said the Skunk. "But I always had a smell, even before *Old*-man gave me the one I now possess, though my clothes were plain and homely. But before I tell the story of How It Came About, I must ask if the Bumble-bee-person is here."

"Yes, yes!" cried the Bee.

"Shall I tell the story?" asked the Skunk.

"If I do tell it, you will not have to talk here, for your story will be told to the Council."

"Yes, tell it, of course. I can't talk well, anyhow."

The Skunk cleared his throat and then he began:

"A long time ago *Old*-man was travelling in the forest. He was looking for a roasting-stick, and came to a choke-cherry tree that was loaded with blossoms. Perfume was in the air all about the bush, and the Bumble-bee-people were there, gathering the honey from the flowers. *Old*-man saw them, but paid no attention to them, and reached for a limb of the choke-cherry bush, to cut it off for his roasting-stick. He bent the limb over, cut it off, and then let the stump fly back, Swow! It flew back among the Bumble-bee-people with terrible force and hurt many of them. It killed some ——"

"One was my own grandfather," interrupted the Bumble-bee.

"Many were crippled," continued the Skunk. "And all those left alive flew at *Old*-man with their stingers, which hurt him. 'Oh, ouch! Oh, ouch!' he cried, as one after another drove his lance deep into *Old*-man's back and shoulders. 'Oh, ouch! Oh, oucho!'

"Then he ran through the forest, calling: 'Help me somebody! Help! Help! These people are killing the man that made you — oh, oucho!'

"I saw him coming, waving his arms and crying like an old woman. 'Help me, my brother!' he begged, when he was near me. 'Help me, and I will make you beautiful to look upon. I 'll reward you — I 'll reward you, brother.'

"I was sorry for him, for the Bumble-bee-people had punished him severely, but I didn't know what to do to help him. I ran ahead of him, thinking, thinking, when Bang! he fell down — he had stumbled over a bush. The Bumble-bee-people were upon him in a moment. His body was full of their stingers.

They were like the arrows of the Redman in his back. I ran to him, and then I made the smell I used to have before I got this real good one that you know about.

"'Bzzzzzzzz — bumblebzzzz — bzzzzzz,' cried the Bees, as the smell grew stronger. 'Bzzzzzz,' and then they ran away and left *Old*-man on the ground.

"'Ho! my brother!' he said, as he sat up. 'You have saved me from those wicked Bumble-bee-people. You have made them run away and grumble and bumble. Now they shall always be grumblers and bumble and buzz throughout their lives to pay for this. I hurt all over. Yes, I am wounded by those people, but I shall reward you, my little brother. Bring me that toad's stool yonder.'

"I brought it.

"'Now get me a bad egg — a real bad egg from a Grouse's nest.'

"I got it, and I found an awful bad one.

"'Go, now, and bring me a small frog,' he said.

"And I found a small frog and brought it to him.

"'Now lie down and sleep,' he commanded.

"I slept.

"'Wake! Wake!' I heard him calling, and I opened my eyes.

"I was black, with a heart-shaped pattern of white on my back. Besides, my tail was white and black and fringed beautifully, as you see it to-night.

"'Here,' said *Old*-man, 'swallow this.' He handed me the skin of the frog I had brought him, and I swallowed it. Boo! but it tasted awful. There was something inside it — something he had made out of those other things I had brought him, but I swallowed as he told me.

"'Now try that new smell,' he said.

"I tried it, and *Old*-man ran away. 'WOW!' he cried. 'That 's lots worse than I thought it would be. Don't come near me. Keep away. WOW! Don't come near me.' And I didn't.

"'See,' he called, 'you have made yellow

spots upon the roots and trunks of the elm-trees with that musk.' And I had. They are there to this day and will always be there.

"You have all heard the Bumble-bee-people buzz and bumble and grumble. Well, that 's what they are grumbling about — that old smell of mine — but it wasn't anything to this one. They 'll be grumbling as long as there are Bumble-bees to pay for hurting *Old*-man. That is my story. I have not lied."

CHAPTER III

AS the Skunk finished and found a place in the Council, everybody looked at the Bumble-bee and smiled.

"You see?" said the Bear. "There is much to learn. It is well that we are here. I thank the Skunk-person for his truthful tale. Let none speak here with a forked tongue.

"I have heard that the Muskrat can tell us why there is so much winter, and we are all anxious to know," said the Bear, after he had thanked the Skunk for his story. "Let the Muskrat-person speak. And let all listen. If any one tells a secret here, let none gossip about it afterward. Brother Muskrat, will you tell us why there is so much winter?"

The Muskrat climbed upon the rock near the fire, and the Birds in the trees and bushes began to twitter and stir. They were obliged to go south every year to avoid the cold weather.

"Some people begin by saying they are poor speakers, but I don't like unnecessary words, myself," said the Muskrat. "I am to blame for the number of months of winter, but if it hadn't been for me the whole year would have been winter." There was a loud jumble of voices at this, and the Bear was obliged to cry, "Silence! Silence! The person is speaking to you."

"When *Old*-man made this world he wanted to suit some of the people," continued the Muskrat. "He was puzzled over the length of time he should make the cold weather stay here. He asked the Beaver, and you all think that person is very smart, but what do you suppose he told *Old*-man when he asked him this question, 'How many moons shall be winter?'"

"We don't know," said the Badger. And the Beaver seemed confused while the Muskrat looked about the audience.

"That smart person, the Beaver," said the Muskrat, "told *Old*-man to make as many

moons to be winter as there were notches on his tail!"

"Ohooo! Ohooo!" came from the people about the fire.

"Yes, he did. And *Old*-man said: 'Why, if I do that, the whole year will be winter-time. I 'll ask the Muskrat what he thinks about it.' And he came to my lodge and said: 'Brother Muskrat, how many moons should be winter-time? I have asked the Beaver, and we don't agree.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I don't care if it 's all winter, but there are other people to consider. Make half the moons cold and half warm — half summer and half winter.' And he did that.

"Of course, I don't know if the Beaver had ever counted the notches on his tail, but it 's all notches. That 's all there is to that story." And he was soon back in his place near the spotted Loon.

CHAPTER IV

"WE are glad that *Old*-man came to see the Muskrat about the winter-time," said the Bear, "and we thank him for what he did then and for his story to-night. It is time that we heard from some of the Bird-people. I will ask the Loon-person to tell us why his bill is not like that of his brother, the Duck."

The Loon arose and walked to the rock. His gait was that of a cripple. "I never like to walk," he began. "I am a cripple on the land since the night *Old*-man kicked me in the back after painting me for the Blind-dance. He kicked me for peeking, but you all know about that.

"One time, long before he gave the Blind-dance to the Duck-people, *Old*-man gave me my sharp bill. It was this way:

"I live on fish, mostly, while the Duck-people

do not. But when *Old*-man made us he gave us all a flat, shovel bill and told us what to eat. I worked hard for my living, but as fast as I could catch the fishes they would get away. My flat bill was no good.

"One day *Old*-man was watching me. He saw how hard I worked for my living, and he called me to him. Then he told me to lie down and sleep. I did sleep, and he took a stone and began to sharpen my bill.

"It took a long time, and I couldn't stay asleep, it hurt so much, but at last it was done, and I can hold almost any fish I can catch since that day. I dive deep and stay under the water long. I am faster than any of my kind in the water, but I 'm a bad cripple on the land since *Old*-man kicked my back. It made my feet turn from my body. That 's all."

CHAPTER V

"NOW," said the Bear, after the Loon had found his place beside the Muskrat, "let the Porcupine tell how he came by his quills."

"The Bear knows already," said the Porcupine, from his seat by the side of the Crane.

"He speaks the truth," said the Bear. "But I would have him tell the story just the same."

"Well, I will, then," said the Porcupine. And he walked out into the firelight.

"Everybody knows I 'm a prickly person," began the Porcupine. "Nobody likes to sit beside me. But once I had no quills, and the Bear used to hurt me. All the meat-eaters like my flesh, and I couldn't live if it were not for my quills, for I cannot fight. I am a peaceable person always. Everybody used to pick on me, but no one does it any more. Some people have lied about me. They have said that I

throw my quills. I do not. I cannot throw them. Sometimes I strike with my tail, and when I hit my enemies with it, I leave many quills deep in their flesh. These sometimes kill my enemies, as you know, because they work in farther as they move about. But long ago my people did not have quills, as you shall see.

"It was in the fall, and my great-grandfather was eating bark on a tree in the forest when he saw the Bear coming toward him. He could not run fast enough to get away, so he climbed the tree. If it had been the Grizzly Bear that was coming, my great-grandfather would have been safe in the tree, but it was the Black Bear, and he climbed up after my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather ran out on a limb, but the Black Bear shook him out and he fell to the ground. As soon as he got his senses back, my great-grandfather ran away, but the Black Bear caught him and rolled him over and over on the ground. 'You tried to climb and you tried to run,' said the Bear. 'You can do neither as

well as I can. Ha, ha, ha!' — and he put his paw on my great-grandfather and rolled him about until the breath was gone from his body. Then he let him up. 'Now run!' cried the Bear. 'Run!' My great-grandfather ran, of course, but the Black Bear caught him again near a big haw bush. 'You tried to get away, didn't you, hey?' said the Bear, as he began to roll my great-grandfather again.

"'Stop it! Stop it!' came a voice from behind the haw bush.

"It was *Old*-man. 'What are you doing to the Porcupine-person?' he asked the Black Bear.

"'I 'm only playing with him,' said the Bear. 'He 's an awful coward.'

"'You can't blame a person if he is made to be a coward. Everybody wasn't intended to be brave. If he were, what would bravery amount to anyhow? You are too rough with the Porcupine-person. I 'll fix things,' said *Old*-man. And he broke all the thorns from

the haw bush and stuck them in my great-grandfather's hair. 'Grow there!' he cried. 'Grow fast and grow to many times the number I have put upon you. When enemies bother you stop them with your tail,' he told my great-grandfather, 'and when they roll you about they will be sorry for it. Now get up and go away.'

"My great-grandfather got up and went away, and never since that day has the Black Bear or anybody else bothered us. All our people have had quills since then, and they always will have them. That is all there is to the quill story."

CHAPTER VI

"YES," said the Bear, "that 's the truth. I guess I ought to know. And now I am going to ask the Weasel why his head is larger around than his body. Maybe he will tell why he changes his coat, too."

"I helped to get up this party," said the Weasel, "and I am ready to do my part now to make it a success.

"Everybody knows how I came by my white robe in winter and my brown coat in summer. *Old*-man gave them to me for saving him from Win-to-coo, the Man-eater; but why my head is so big is another story and, up to now, a secret in our family. After to-night it will not be a secret, for I shall tell how I came by it.

"When *Old*-man made me he fashioned my head smaller around than my body, like the heads of other people. But my small head often got me into trouble. One day I was hunting, and all I could find was a Mouse and

his family in a hole in a half-rotten log. I knew all the family were at home, but the hole came out on the other side of the log, so that if I went in one end the Mouse family was sure to run out at the other end.

"I thought about it quite a while, and finally decided to dash into the hole so fast they could not get out before I caught them. So I crept up to the hole and looked in. In fact, I poked my head inside quite a way. Then I backed away and ran as fast as I could into the hole, when, oh! my sides caught tight against the sides of the hole. I was going so fast when I got caught tight in the hole that my ribs were bent and my heart almost stopped its beating.

"I tried to get out, but I couldn't. Then I tried to drag myself ahead, but I couldn't do that either. Of course, the Mouse and his family had gone, but I didn't mind that. What I wanted now was to get out or farther in — anything to relieve the pain in my body. But I couldn't move an inch.

"I was sure I would die there in the hole, and I began to cry. My breath was short, but I called as loudly as I could for help. At last some one sat down on the log. The Person heard and asked, 'Who is that calling for help?'

"'It is I, the Weasel,' I answered. 'I am caught in this hole and can't get out. Help me or I 'll die.'

"It was *Old*-man who answered. 'All right, I 'll help you,' and he tore away the sides of the hole with his fingers and let me out.

"'How did you get in there?' he asked.

"'Why, I chased a Mouse in there,' I told him. 'I have to live.'

"'You ought to find out if a hole is big enough before you go running into it. Always look into a hole first,' he advised.

"'I did look in,' I told him, 'but you made my head smaller than my body, and expected me to make my living by hunting in holes. I 'm not to blame.'

"'I was in a hurry when I made you,' he

said. 'Your head is too long and slim, I guess. I 'll fix it for you. Wait here until I come back.' He went to a creek near by, and picked up a smooth stick the high water had left in the spring. Then he came back to me and began pounding my nose and head with the stick. My head swelled until my eyes were closed tight and I could not see. I cried and cried while *Old*-man was beating my head, but I am glad that he did it now. My eyes came back and I see as well as ever, although my head remained large and my nose stubby from the pounding he gave it with the stick. Now my head is larger around than my body, and I can enter any hole that will admit my head. I am not afraid in the dark nor in any hole, for the people who live in small holes are no match for me. I guess that is all I can tell you."

CHAPTER VII

"WE all know the Weasel is not afraid," said the Bear. "He is a great warrior, even if he is small. This fire is getting low. I 'll just put on some more wood." And he did.

"There," said the Bear, "that is fine. Now, we would like to hear from some of the people that live on the plains. I have often wondered how the Antelope came to be marked so queerly, and I call upon him to tell us how he came by those strange markings."

The Antelope bounded out into the firelight. "Look at me!" he cried. Then he stood very still. "If I stand still on the plains I am very hard to see because of my stripes and marks. *Old*-man gave them to me, but I earned them first," he said. "A thousand of my people may be right in the open on the plains, and yet often eyes will fail to see them if they all stand still. But if they were to turn around and run, why

then anybody could see them. This is How It Came About:

"The day was hot. The sun had baked the plains until they were cracked. The water-holes were dry, and the grass crackled when any person walked upon it. The Badger stayed in his hole in the ground. The Sage Hens, with beaks apart and wings held away from their bodies, walked about, looking for big sage-bushes in which to find relief from the sun. Even the Rattlesnake hated to crawl over the plains, they were so hot and dry, and the Buffalo had gone away altogether. But there was no place for me to go. I had to stay on the plains. I am no good in the forest. There 's where I lost my dew-claws, but you all know about that. I 'm better on the plains than the Deer-person. I proved that when I won his gall sack that morning when I met him on the plains. The plains are my home, so I had to stay there. But I was afraid I would die for want of water.

"The sun was just coming up to burn the grass one morning when I saw *Old*-man coming, and I waited for him. He was all bent over and lame from long travelling, and when he reached my side he said: 'Show me water.'

"'I can't,' I told him. 'The plains-people are all dying for want of water, and you will die, too.'

"'No,' he said, 'I can't die, but I need a drink, and I always get what I want. I made the world and I made you, too.'

"'I know you did,' I said, 'but you should have put a river of water on these plains, so that the people you made to live here could get along. I expect to die soon. I cannot stand it much longer.'

"'Oh, I made some mistakes when I made the world. I was in a hurry and it was the first one I ever made, but,' admitted *Old*-man, 'a river would run through this plain if it came about where you are standing now. You stay right where you are until I bring a river. It is

so dry now that in order to get water I shall have to go where it is.'

"'I can't stand here,' I told him. 'Suppose the Wolf should come along. He 'd see me, and I 'd have to run, or he 'd kill me. Besides, running makes me more thirsty.'

"'That 's so,' said *Old*-man, 'but I 'll fix you so the Wolf can't see you.'

"Then he went to a bad-land coulee and brought some reddish-brown dirt and some white dirt and some black dirt. He rubbed it into my hair in stripes and queer half-heart-shaped designs. Then he walked away and looked at me a little while and laughed. 'Ha, ha, ha! Why, I can hardly see you, myself. But I can fix it a little better yet.' It was then that he marked my nose as you see it. 'There,' he said, 'the Wolf-person can't see you as long as you stand still and keep the wind from him. I 'll be back with a River as soon as I can. Stand right here so I will know where the River will run best.'

"Then he started toward the north, and I stood still. In a little while I heard some one coming, and turned my head to see who it was. It was *Old*-man, and he was carrying a lot of whiter dirt.

"'I was afraid you 'd run away, so I 'll just fix you in a way that will make it foolish to run when you don't have to.' He rubbed all of the white dirt on my rump until I was whiter than snow behind. 'There,' he said, 'you 'll be safe as long as you stand still, but if you turn to run everybody will be able to see you. Now I 'm going after the River.' And he went.

"The sun went down. The moon came. In the cool of night the Wolf passed me. Once he thought he saw me and stopped to look. My heart bounded with fear, for he was close to me; but at last he went on. The marks on my body had fooled him and I was happy. I saw the Badger that night too, but he didn't see me. The Coyote killed a Jack-rabbit near

by, but even the Coyote didn't see me, for the wind was wrong and did not tell him I was near.

"At last the morning came. The sun like a ball of fire came into sight, and then, when I looked to the north, I saw something coming. I watched until my eyes ached. Finally a wind came from the northward, and a great noise that made the earth tremble. I was frightened, but I dared not run away. At last I heard singing. It was *Old*-man, and his words were these:

"'Oh, my people of the plains, I have brought you a River.
Drink of the water at will. It shall never run dry.
Its bottom shall always be covered with water.'

"Behind him I saw the waters creeping and cutting their way through the hot land. Herds of Buffalo were following, flocks of Birds were singing, and the bushes were growing green along the way of the water. It was a beautiful and at the same time a terrible sight.

"At last *Old*-man saw me, for he knew I was there. He waved his hand and told me to get out of the way, and I did. When he passed me he was singing that song, but he did not speak to me. He went on out of sight, and the River followed him all the way. It is as he said it would be; the River never runs dry, and nobody can see me if I stand still. That 's how I came by these marks. I have told my story."

CHAPTER VIII

"WE are all thankful to the Antelope, not only for his story, but for the part he played in bringing the River to the plains. It was news to me. While we are talking about water, it would be well to hear from the Crane-person. Tell us, Brother Crane, how you came by those long legs and your long neck and bill. I have often wondered."

The Crane walked out before the people, and a Fish called from the lake: "Tell the truth, O Crane. The Fish-people suffer because of your legs and neck and bill."

"I will speak the truth," said the Crane. Then he began:

"One day I was standing in some shallow water at the edge of a lake. My legs were short and I could not swim, so I had to stay in shallow water. Even if I could have waded deep, I could not have reached food that was

on the bottom, because my neck was short and so was my bill; but I was doing the best I could. The sun was getting low when I saw somebody at the upper end of the lake. I watched the Person and at last saw him wade out into the water, with a stick in his hand. It was *Old*-man, and he saw me. 'Come here, Crane-person,' he called, and of course I had to go. 'I want you to help me,' said *Old*-man, when I was near to him.

"'What do you want me to do?' I asked.

"'I am going to give a big dance to the Animal-people when the moon is full, and I want to make me a fine necklace to wear that night,' he said. 'I am trying to get enough of these white shells, but they are on the edge of the deep water, and I can't reach them. They roll about under this stick. And I have promised to give that dance to the Animal-people.'

"I remembered that Blind-dance he gave to the Duck-people, but I didn't say anything.

"'Will you help me?' he asked.

"'How can I help you, *Old*-man? I can't swim. I can't dive. My legs are too short to walk out there where the white shells are lying.'

"'Well, I 've got to have that necklace,' he said. 'Come here.'

"I walked up close and he grabbed my legs and began to pull them. He put his foot against my body and pulled and pulled. I cried out, it hurt me so, but he only laughed. 'Ha, ha, ha! I 'll fix you so you can walk out where the white shells are lying. There!' And he gave an awful pull, and my legs were as you see them to-night.

"'Now walk out there and get me a lot of those shells,' he said.

"I walked out to the edge of the deep water. The bottom was dotted with the shells. I could see them in the clear water plainly. 'What 's the matter?' he called. 'Don't you see any shells?'

"'Yes,' I told him. 'I see many shells — very fine ones, but I can't reach them. My

legs are so long I can't reach the bottom with my bill. Why, I don't see how I shall ever make my living now! I shall have to sit down to eat.'

"'Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!' he laughed. 'I am always making mistakes. Come out here.'

"'Don't you hurt me any more,' I begged.

"'Come here to me!' he cried, and I waded ashore.

"He grabbed my head and stretched my neck until I was sure he would break it. My! but it hurt terribly. 'There, now see if you can pick up things near your feet,' he said. I tried, but I couldn't do it. 'Say,' he said, 'if I stretch your neck any more you would have to be working all the time in order to get enough food through it to feed your body. But I 've got a plan. Come closer!' (I had walked away from him.) I came closer, and then he grabbed my bill and pulled it out long and sharp-pointed.

"'Ouch! Oh!' I cried, and he laughed.

"'Now try to pick up something near your

feet!' I tried, and did it. 'Now I've fixed you so you can help me. Go and get a lot of those little white shells.' And I did — I had to. That's how I came by my long legs, my long neck and bill, and they have been very useful ever since ——"

"We should say they had!" called the Fish-people.

CHAPTER IX

"THAT 'S a good story, Brother Crane," said the Bear. "Be seated and I shall ask the Mouse-person why it is that all his people look exactly alike. Please keep very quiet, for the Mouse has a small voice."

The little Mouse ran out and jumped upon the rock near the fire. "I 'm glad I 'm here," he began. "I have had a good time, and I 'm anxious to help others to be happy, so I will tell a family secret. I hope none of you will repeat it where Win-to-coo may hear, lest he revenge himself upon my father, who is old."

"We will never tell it," cried the people. "Go on with the story."

"It happened in the forest," began the Mouse. "My father was a young man then, and quite handsome. He was a spotted Mouse and you would have known him anywhere. He was different from the others because of a white spot on his back. In those days no two

Mice looked alike, but my father was called the handsomest Mouse alive. He lived with my mother in a hollow log in the forest, and one day he went hunting. I was a baby then, but I remember what happened. I heard my father tell my mother about it that night.

"My father was near a large fallen tree when he heard some one groan — some large Person. He was frightened, and was about to run away from the place, when he heard a voice calling: 'Won't somebody help me? I made the world and everything on it. Will you give me no help?'

"My father crept toward the spot, and there was *Old*-man, tied hand and foot with ropes of cedar bark. He could roll over — that was all, for his knees were tied so that he could not bend them to stand up. My father ran close to the prisoner, and asked: 'Why are you here? Who has done this?'

"'It is Win-to-coo, the Man-eater, that has done this,' sobbed *Old*-man. 'He caught me

as I slept and tied me with these ropes of cedar bark. He has gone in search of a knife with which to take my life. Save me, little brother, save me, the man that made you.'

"'I wish you had made fewer enemies for me,' said my father, 'but I 'll see what I can do.' Then he began to gnaw at the ropes of cedar bark. He worked fast, for my father was afraid of Win-to-coo, the Man-eater.

"He had cut the bark that held *Old*-man's legs when he heard somebody coming. 'Run!' said my father. 'Run! You can run now, and I will follow and finish the job when you stop running.'

"*Old*-man got to his feet and ran. Win-to-coo came out of the brush and saw *Old*-man running away. 'Ha!' he cried. 'Who has dared help *Old*-man?'

"Then he saw my father and chased him a long way, but my father hid in a hole in a tree. 'I know you by the spot on your back, and some day I will find you!' cried Win-to-coo.

"That frightened my father, for he knew that the Man-eater had recognized him. He kept still, and when Win-to-coo had gone away he crawled out of the hole in the tree and listened a long time. Then he followed after *Old*-man, whom he found near a river.

"'I thought you 'd never come,' said *Old*-man. 'Do you suppose a person wants to be tied up all day? Hurry now and cut these bark ropes from my arms.'

"'You are not the only one that is in trouble,' said my father. 'I helped you, and now I must suffer, for Win-to-coo saw me.'

"'He won't know you,' declared *Old*-man.

"'Yes, he will,' said my father. 'He said he would know me by the spot on my back.'

"'He said that, did he? Well, there 's where he made a mistake. A person should not tell all he knows. Hurry and cut these ropes, and I 'll fix that spot for you. I 'll make you look like your cousin. Ha, ha, ha! That will be a joke on him.'

"'Yes, it will,' said my father, 'but it won't be funny to my cousin. No, that won't do. Each person should suffer his own punishments. My cousin isn't to blame for helping you. Your plan doesn't suit me. I won't cut these ropes until you tell me a better way.'

"'Well, then,' said *Old*-man, 'you cut these ropes and I 'll make every Mouse that lives now or that ever shall live to look alike. Their own mothers shall be unable to tell them apart by their looks. That will fix it, won't it?'

"'Yes,' said my father, and he cut the ropes.

"That is how we all came to be alike."

Having finished his story, the Mouse ran back to his seat, and the Bear said: "I hope that no person who has heard the Mouse's secret will ever tell it where Win-to-coo may hear, for his father would suffer, and the Man-eater is no friend of any one near this fire."

CHAPTER X

THE Bear threw a big log on the blaze, and the sparks flew up in a red cloud that looked pretty. "The Lynx-person is a cousin of the Mountain Lion," he said, "and we would like to know how it comes that his tail is so short. Will you tell us about it, Brother Lynx?"

"Yes, of course I will," said the Lynx, walking toward the rock by the fire. "I suppose you have noticed that the end of my tail is black?" began the Lynx. "Once it was long, and the end was not black. My tail was just as long as my body, and I was handsome. But I was foolish when I was young, and my foolishness cost me my tail.

"I was out on the plains one winter day. I had come down from the mountains by following a creek that flowed to the low country. I had killed a few Rabbits after I left the moun-

tains, but I was still hungry when I got out on the plains. There were a few trees and lots of bushes along the stream that I was following, but the weather was growing colder every minute, and I wanted to kill something before night. My coat is warm in winter, so I didn't mind the cold much, although the wind of the plains is stronger than that of the mountains and forests.

"The day was dying when I saw some Antelope in a coulee not far from the creek. They can beat me running, and they wouldn't come near the trees that grew near the creek. If they had, I could have climbed a tree and sprung upon the smallest among them and killed him.

"I waited a long time. The wind was terrible. The cold grew stronger and stronger. At last a blizzard came out of the north, and even my coat was not heavy enough to keep out the cold. Hmm-mmm-mmm—ow—oo-o, sang the awful wind, and the Antelope huddled together in the coulee. I was hardly able to see them.

"I had made up my mind to find shelter and go hungry to sleep, when from behind a cotton-wood tree *Old*-man came toward me.

"'Why don't you kill one of those Antelope?' he asked.

"'I can't,' I said.

"'Why?' he asked.

"'Because I can't run fast enough. You ought to know. You made both of us.'

"'Well, we must have meat,' he said. 'You crawl out to that sage-bush and hold up your tail. Keep moving the end of it a little.'

"I started to do as he said. 'Wait! not yet! I must fix you first.'

"Then he got out his paint-sack and painted the tip of my tail bright red. 'There,' he said. 'Now go and do as I told you. When they see that red on your tail, they will come to see what it is. As soon as they are close enough spring upon one of them and I will be there to help you hold him. If you don't kill him I will.'

"I had no trouble in getting to the sage-brush unseen by the Antelope, and I stuck my tail up over its top. I began moving the red tip about as *Old*-man had told me. Slowly I moved it back and forth, the wind making it hard to do. I thought the Antelope would never notice my tail, for the snow that the wind was blowing made it hard to see very far.

"At last, however, a Buck-antelope noticed the red tip of my tail. He walked a step or two toward me. I held my tail still, and he stopped and looked again, as though he thought he had been mistaken. While he looked I moved it again ever so little. He came toward me a few steps closer, then stopped. I held my tail still a little while, then moved it once more, and he came on. The rest followed him.

"At last he stopped, but too far away, and I wiggled and waved my tail a good deal, for I was growing anxious. My tail was getting cold. The blood had left it, and had gone into my body, but still I continued to wiggle its

painted top. The buck turned a little and came closer and stopped again. He was nearly close enough, but he was a big one — too big to handle alone. I tried to move my tail again. But it wouldn't wiggle. Then I thought I 'd let it down; but it wouldn't come down — it was frozen stiff.

"When I knew what had happened I was angry with *Old*-man, and my anger lent me strength and speed. I sprang upon the buck. But he would have escaped me if *Old*-man hadn't come to my aid. Together we killed him.

"'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed *Old*-man. 'Where 's your tail?'

"I looked. It was gone — broken off within two inches of my body. My beautiful tail was gone! I began to cry.

"'Never mind, brother,' said *Old*-man. 'I 'll fix it, and remember that we have meat. A full stomach is better than a tail.'

"He built a fire and warmed my body. Then

he took a blackened stick from the fire and colored the stump of a tail the blizzard had left me. 'It isn't much of a tail,' he said, 'but that black end will make it good to look at. Whenever you see it you will remember this day.' And I do.

"That 's the way I lost my tail, and if my cousin, the Mountain Lion, ever listens to *Old*-man, he is foolish. The Bob-cat-person must have lost his tail, too."

"I did," said the Bob-cat. "A Person cut it off. There 's no story to that."

"Well, my story is told, anyhow. I thank you for listening," said the Lynx.

CHAPTER XI

THE night was already old when the Lynx began to speak, and when he finished the moon had gone down behind the big trees in the forest. The Bear stirred the fire to make more light, and the Weasel put some birch bark upon the blaze. The bark caught fire in a minute, and the firelight reached farther into the forest than ever before. When the Bear looked at the people before him, he noticed the Rabbit, sitting apart from the rest.

"I see our brother the Rabbit is with us," he said. "Will he come out to this rock near the fire and tell us how he came by his funny turned-up tail, and why he never winks his eyes?"

"If you will promise not to let any of my enemies sneak up behind me while I am talking, I 'll tell my story," said the Rabbit.

"I 'll promise," said the Bear. "Nobody

shall bother you while you are here. You know that, don't you, Brother Rabbit?"

"No, I don't," objected the Rabbit. "And that 's just why I seldom wink. I daren't." He came out to the stone and hopped upon it. "I wouldn't believe anybody any time," he began. "Most everybody here eats meat, and everybody that eats meat is after me night and day. I get very little sleep and I don't even dare to wink very often, although sometimes I do wink. But *Old*-man told me always to keep my eyes open, and I have to do it in order to stay alive. He made more enemies for me than for any other person here. Why, some of my worst enemies fly in the air, and every bush is apt to be a hiding-place for an enemy of mine. Talk about winking! Why, I wouldn't dare to close my eyes that long, very often.

"But my tail — well, that 's another story. I know that it is funny, even funnier than the Bear's tail, or the Lynx's tail, or any other person's tail, for that matter. It wasn't always

as it is to-night, by any means. *Old*-man and the Otter-person are to blame for ——"

Suddenly the Rabbit jumped down from the rock and bounded away into the shadows.

"Here, come back!" called the Bear.

"Yes, and be killed by the Lynx-person. I saw him do that," said the Rabbit from behind a bush.

"Do what?" asked the Bear.

"Oh, I only changed my position," said the Lynx. "My paw was asleep, and I moved it. That 's all."

"Come back, Brother Rabbit," coaxed the Bear. "The Lynx won't harm you. I give you my word."

So the little coward came back to the rock. His sides were panting and his nose was working queerly. One would have thought that he was chewing, but he wasn't.

"Well, as I was saying," began the Rabbit a second time, "the Otter-person and *Old*-man are to blame for my funny tail. I was crossing

a high mountain one day in the early spring-time, and right on the top of that mountain I saw two people acting queerly. I went away around them so the wind would not tell them I was near, and hopped close enough to see who they were.

"The persons were *Old*-man and the Otter, and the Otter was teaching *Old*-man to slide down-hill. First the Otter-person would run along on the crust of the snow, for it was very deep there in the mountains. Then he would flop down and slide like a streak for a long way. Then he would climb back to *Old*-man and they would both laugh.

"'Try it,' said the Otter.

"'I 'm afraid the snow would rub my skin off,' objected *Old*-man.

"'It doesn't hurt mine,' said the Otter.

"'I know that, of course; I made you that way. I was good to you.'

"'Try it. You 'll like it. It 's great fun,' I heard the Otter say.

"There were some fir-trees not far away, and *Old*-man went among them and took the bark from one that was dead. He carried the bark to where the Otter had started to slide and sat down upon it. 'Here I go!' he cried. 'I 've taken the skin from a dead fir-tree to save my own. Ha, ha, ha!'

"'Go on,' laughed the Otter-person. 'You 'll like it.'

"The Otter ran and flopped down on the slide. Away he went like a streak. *Old*-man, digging his heels into the crusted snow, edged the bark close to the slide until it balanced on the very brink.

"'Come on, you 'll like it!' called the Otter once more; and *Old*-man went over the brink.

"I ran out to the edge myself. *Old*-man's hair was flying in the wind. The fir bark made a great noise on the snow as it sped down the mountain, and the Otter screamed in delight. He could see *Old*-man's face, but I couldn't. It must have been funny to look at.

"There was a gulch at the bottom of the slide, and that stopped *Old*-man very suddenly — so suddenly that the bark flew into a thousand pieces, and *Old*-man's head was driven through the crust on the snow. His legs were squirming about in the air, and the Otter was rolling over and over, nearly dead from laughing. I laughed, too, and *Old*-man heard me and sat up.

"'Come on, you 'll like it,' he called.

"That was what the Otter had said; but I said: 'No, I 'm afraid.'

"'Come on, you 'll like it,' they both called, and I sat down at the brink of the slide.

"I didn't intend to go down that hill at all. My tail was long and bushy like the Squirrel-people's, and it was curled up over my back. The Otter was talking to me, and the wind was blowing his words away. I was trying to hear what he said when somebody pushed me from behind. I never knew who did it."

The Porcupine laughed. The Rabbit looked

at him. He was sitting with his back against a pine-tree. "Was it you?" demanded the Rabbit.

"No," said the Porcupine. "It wasn't I that pushed you. It was my grandfather."

"It was, hey?" said the Rabbit. "Well, I certainly slid down that mountain. The gulch below seemed to be flying right up at me, I was going so fast. I landed in a pile. But I got up running, for I was frightened and angry. The snow had worn my long tail off and had flattened out the stump, besides. When the hair grew back on the stump, it was white — the same color as the snow on that mountain. I sit on my tail to hide it, ever since.

"When I move about my tail shows plainly and helps my enemies find me. There are two reasons why I sit on my tail when I stop any place. One is to hide it from my enemies; the other is because I 'm ashamed of it. That 's the tale of my tail. I have finished."

CHAPTER XII

EVERYBODY laughed, and the Bear thanked the Rabbit and called upon the Sage Hen to tell why she had no gizzard, like the others of her kind.

"Well," said the Sage Hen, "it 's inside information, but I 'll out with it. You all know that when *Old*-man made the animals and birds he came out of the South and travelled toward the North as he worked. The Big-horn was one of the last people he made, but not the very last. I think that was the White Bear, who lives where there is always ice. I have never seen the White Bear myself, but the North Wind has told me stories of him and his people. *Old*-man couldn't have gone much farther toward the north than where the White Bear lives, or he might have frozen to death at his work. Nothing lives there but the White Bear and the North Wind. Sometimes the North

Wind leaves the ice and comes to the plains. Then the White Bear is alone.

"I am the only bird that has a stomach. The rest have to carry little stones about in their gizzards to grind up the food they eat. I am a pretty big bird, and I live on the plains where the sun is hot in summer and where the winds are cold in winter. I 'd have to carry a lot of rock about with me in order to grind up the food I eat, and I 'm glad I do not have to carry such a load. But *Old*-man made a mistake, or I would have had to.

"It was hot weather when he made me and the Prairie Chicken and the Blue Grouse and a lot of other people. He had hard work to find stones of the proper size for the gizzards of each of the birds he made that day, and as fast as he found them he piled them up in little heaps on a flat rock on the plains. The pile he saved for me was larger than any of the others, of course, and the stones were of larger size. I remember that they were yellow in color, too.

He had picked them up in a dry coulee not far away, and I didn't like the looks of them at all. I was the last bird he made that day, and when he had finished painting my breast — I think I have a beautiful breast — he said: 'Here, now, swallow these little stones. They will go into a sack inside you. They will grind up the things you eat. Once a month you must find more stones like these and swallow a few, because these will grow round and lose their sharp edges.'

"Then he told me where to find the stones and what to eat when I could find it. 'Now go,' he said. 'And stay out of the timberlands. Stay where the Antelope stays, and where you can see a long way. I have made you hard to see when you stand still on the ground. Good-by.' And he left me.

"I ate what *Old*-man had told me to eat, but the stones he had made me swallow did no good at all. I swallowed a few more, but they didn't help me. The next day it rained, and I thought I 'd try a few more stones in my giz-

zard. I went to that coulee. The yellow stones were not there. The rain had melted them; and *Old*-man was too far away to help me.

"I didn't eat any more stones. I knew that *Old*-man had made a mistake, so I went without stones in my gizzard, and kept eating the other things he had told me to eat. I lived and grew fat. My gizzard turned into a stomach like that of the Bear or any other person. That 's the whole story. It was all a mistake, but I 'm glad it was made. I don't have to carry a gizzard full of stones about with me in hot weather."

"Now," said the Bear, "we know how that strange thing came to be. I have wondered about it, and we thank you very much. Be seated, and I shall then ask the Woodpecker to tell us how he can pound on a dead tree without hurting his face."

CHAPTER XIII

THE Sage Hen found her place among the Bird-people who live on the ground, and the Woodpecker walked out and hopped on the rock by the fire.

"My face *is* pretty hard," he said. "Ours is a large family. We all have hard faces and pound upon the trees with our bills. We make our living that way, but sometimes we do it for fun. While I am here, I might as well speak for other members of our family. There 's the Yellowhammer, for instance. He does much the same things that I do. You have often wondered how he came by that flashing color he shows when he flies. I 'll tell you. That 's sunlight. He 's always out early and on the top of some dead tree, where the first rays of the sun — the rays that are golden — fall upon him. There 's where he got that color. When

he flies he flickers along. That 's to show off his sunlight wings. I like that person myself.

"They say that I am a gossip and a tale-bearer. Well, maybe I am. Anyhow, I am going to talk about somebody now. He 's here, so it won't be so bad as saying things about one who is not present. The Pine-squirrel-person is not so decent as some of you believe him to be. He does some things that I do not believe *Old-man* told him to do. Almost all the Bird-people could tell things on him, but they 're afraid to. We of the Woodpecker family are not afraid, because we can take care of ourselves. That Squirrel-person sucks eggs and even kills the very young birds sometimes. He can't get into our nests if we are at home, because we would peck his eyes out, but it 's different with the other birds. He began to do these things long ago, but it never got out till now. And now you know why my family build their nests in holes in the trees — holes that we make for ourselves. He 's a mean person, that Pine-squirrel.

But you wanted to know about my hard bill. I 'll tell you.

"One day *Old*-man was fishing. He had a bone hook and a hair-line, but no bait. He was turning over the stones near the river, looking for a worm with which to bait his hook, when I lit in a dead tree near by. I was looking for worms and bugs myself.

"'Say, Woodpecker-person,' called *Old*-man. 'I want a worm.'

"'So do I,' I told him.

"'Don't you be saucy to the man who made you,' he snapped.

"'Well, I didn't lie. I *do* want a worm,' I said. 'I don't see anything very saucy about that.'

"'That tree is full of worms and bugs,' he told me.

"'I know it,' I said. 'I can hear them inside, but I can't get them. The wood is too hard.'

"'Well, I want a big, fat worm to put on this fish-hook. Come down here.'

"I came down, and *Old*-man picked me up and started for the mountains.

"'Where are we going?' I asked him.

"'Never mind,' he said. 'I 'm going to fix you so you can dig out the worms and bugs that live in the trees.'

"He began to climb so high that the weather was growing cool, and I told him so, but he kept going on. When he struck the snow I objected, but he said: 'Keep quiet. I know what is best for you.'

"I had never seen mountains so high before. When we were above timber-line and the bleak peaks of the mountains were all about us, I shivered. The snow was as deep as the pine-trees are tall, and still *Old*-man kept on. The wind was out of the north, and I pitied the White Bear who has to live with the North Wind; but *Old*-man wouldn't turn back. His breath was white in the winter, which stays in the clouds that hide the high mountain tops. Booo! I was nearly dead with cold when *Old*-man

stopped. My head was in his hair, for I had sat on his shoulder all the way.

"'Here we are,' he said, and I looked out.

"'Boo-oo!' I shivered. He was standing on a glacier. The blue ice was all about us, with fine, powdery snow dancing and whishing over it in the North Wind. As far as I could see there was ice and snow, and that 's the only time I ever saw the land where winter was born. The sun goes around that place, I am sure.

"'Now,' said *Old*-man, 'what I am going to do will hurt you for a minute, but you will have to stand it.' And he stuck my bill in a crack in the ice and held me tight.

"'Oh!' I cried. 'I 'll die.'

"'No, you won't. Ha, ha, ha!' he laughed. 'I 'll make your bill so hard that you can pick a hole through any tree that grows. Ha, ha, ha! I have to have a big, fat worm to bait my fish-hook.'

"I don't know how long he held me there. I lost my senses. The last I remember of that

glacier was when I dreamed that my head was afire. Next I felt my feet upon the limb of a tree. I opened my eyes. The light hurt them at first, but at last I kept them open. I saw that I was back in the tree by the river, and that *Old*-man was standing near with his fish-pole in his hands. I was dizzy, and nearly fell off the limb.

"'Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!' *Old*-man was laughing. 'Dig out a big, fat worm with your new bill,' he said, and I did.

"I gave him the worm, and then he said to me: 'All your family shall have hard bills and faces from now on.'

"And that came true, though it had hurt terribly. That 's all."

CHAPTER XIV

"I SUPPOSE that did hurt, but you can make a living more easily now," said the Bear, as the Woodpecker-person flew into a tree over the head of the Wolf. "Not all of the people here see the Buffalo upon the plains, but those who do see him there have wondered at his great head and shoulders. Why are you so high in front and so low behind, Brother Buffalo? Be careful, do not step upon the Mouse-person when you come forward. He is so small that you might not see him."

The Buffalo walked carefully and did not disturb any of the small people at the Council. He came to the rock and bowed to the Bear. The Bear said: "We 'll be glad to hear what you have to say, and perhaps you will tell us

why your tongue is black, too. I 've noticed it so many times when you people are running. You stick out your tongues and they are black. I don't understand that."

The Buffalo's voice was deep and hoarse when he began. "*Old*-man did these things for us, but the black tongue is a secret. If I tell it, there are people here who might take advantage of it, I suppose, but we are all telling the truth, and I shall not lie. When *Old*-man made me my tongue was red — the same as the tongues of other people. I wasn't high in front, either; but he had to improve me or I could not have lived, as you shall see.

"When *Old*-man made the first Buffalo, he put them on the plains and told them to stay there, and they did. It was summer, and they got fat and felt fine; but at last the winter came. They had a hard time of it then. The North Wind left the land of the White Bear and made war upon them, and they died. Their bodies dotted the plains and made white hum-

mocks under the snow when the North Wind had finished fighting my people.

"Then *Old*-man came and saw what the North Wind had done. He was angry. 'Hey, you North Wind,' he called. 'Come to me!' And the North Wind came. 'What have you been doing to these Buffalo?' he asked.

"'I have made war upon them and have killed them with the strong breath that you gave me,' replied the Wind.

"'Stop it,' said *Old*-man. 'I shall make some more, but you must not kill them.'

"'Then you will have to make me different,' said the North Wind. 'I do as you told me to do. I live where you said I must live. I come here with the Winter once in a while. If you want me to stay away always, I am willing. I like the White Bear and our country well enough. You said there would be times when I would be needed here, so I come when I feel like coming. You 'll have to make me over, I guess.'

"'No,' said *Old*-man, 'I made you as I want you. I made a mistake when I made these Buffalo-people. Go back to the land of the White Bear. I don't like to have you near me.'

"The North Wind went away, and then *Old*-man thought a long time. At last he made me as you see me — high in front and low behind. He put heavy hair on my robe and hid my face in it. 'There,' he said, 'when the North Wind comes again to make war, you turn and face him. Never let him get behind you. If his war lasts long, you may even kneel down, facing him. He cannot kill you. Is there anything else you need to make you happy?'

"'Yes,' I said. 'I have to run a good deal. The Wolf-people chase my children if they stray from their mother's side. Great packs of the Wolf-people follow me wherever I go. One or two of the Wolf-people would be easy for me to handle, but when they come at me in hundreds I cannot beat them off always. Sometimes they chase me until I am nearly dead. I

dare not stick out my tongue that I may breathe easier, lest they know that my strength is failing. I wish you 'd fix it so I can get more breath without showing my tongue.'

"*Old*-man thought a long time. 'I don't see how I can do that,' he said; 'but I 'll tell you what I can do. I 'll make your tongue black. Anybody's tongue is black when he is being chased to death, but from now on yours shall be black all the time. Whenever you start running, stick out your tongue. The Wolf-people will see that it is black, but they will know that you are not tired. It will always be black, and they can never tell when you are nearly dead from running.'

"I always do stick out my tongue when I run. At first the Wolf-people thought I was going to die, but I fooled them with my black tongue. I run straight ahead when once I start. I run far. *Old*-man told me to do these things and I do them. I hope the Wolf-person will not take advantage of what I have said."

"I promise that I will not," said the Wolf. "I can get along with what I have always known about you. Your fire is getting low, Brother Bear."

CHAPTER XV

"OUR friend, the Ruffed Grouse, is here," said the Bear, bowing low to the Partridge. "I have often heard him drumming, and sometimes I have seen him standing upon a log when he was making that booming sound; but I don't know how he does it. His movements are too quick for my eyes."

"Yes, tell us," called the Red Fox. "I 've seen you drum a thousand times, but I don't know how you do it."

"There must be a story connected with the drumming," continued the Bear, "and the people would like to hear it. Will you not tell us the story, Brother Ruffed Grouse?"

"Yes," said the Ruffed Grouse, "I 'll tell the story. But I don't want to stand on that rock. It 's too close to the fire."

"Well, fly up into that fir-tree and speak as loud as you can," suggested the Bear.

The Ruffed Grouse flew into the tree with a whir, and settled upon a limb of the fir-tree. It was a slender limb, and it swayed and teetered under his weight.

"Say," he began, "I can tell you my story from here, but I can't show you how I drum. If you 'll go to that log over yonder I 'll drum."

"Tell your story and then we 'll go to the log," said the Bear.

"Well, one time I was living near a river," began the Ruffed Grouse. "There were many willows along the stream, and the great cotton-wood-trees that had grown old and died were upon the ground in many places. It was in the fall. The leaves were all yellow against the blue sky. I was fat and my wife was fat. Our children had grown up and could care for themselves. We were happy. The days were warm and the nights cool under a sky of stars.

"One night my wife had gone to roost in a spruce-tree. The moon was full as it is to-night,

only it was clearer because of the season. I was thinking how good it was to be alive in this world, and wishing I could tell of my joy in life when a dark shadow fell upon me. I ran down the log. I am always watching for enemies.

"'Wait! Wait! I want to talk to you,' called a voice. It was *Old*-man that spoke. I saw him plainly in the moonlight. I stopped. 'Come here,' he called, as he sat down on the log.

"I walked back to where he sat and he said: 'Don't you feel happy?'

"'Yes, I do,' I told him.

"'You do not make it known,' he grumbled. 'When the days are fine, you do not show your pleasure in them. When the seasons suit you, you never speak. When there is to be a change in the weather that will help you live, you remain silent, and I've wondered why.'

"'I have been sitting here wishing that I had the voice of the Owl,' I said. 'If I could

make my happiness known to all the forest-people I would do it, but I have no way. You gave me none.'

"'Didn't I?' he asked.

"'No, you didn't,' I told him. 'I can't sing. All I can do is make a few noises with my voice. They are not pleasant sounds, nor would they be heard far.'

"'You live where there are logs,' he said, after he had been silent a while. 'I 'll tell you what to do when you are happy. Straighten up!'

"I did.

"'Now throw the tops of your wings backward — farther! Farther!' he insisted as I forced them back. 'There,' he said. 'Now tip up the ends — the tips, in front of you.'

"I did it.

"'Stand as you are and strike the tips of your wings together with an inward and upward stroke.'

"I tried it. It made a noise like thunder.

" 'One, two, three, four — whirrrrrrrr!' cried *Old*-man. 'Do it that way.'

"And I did. I've been doing it ever since when I am happy or when a change is coming in the weather — a change that will suit me better. I drum at any season in the year, when I am happy. . . . And now I'll show you how I do it."

Whirr-rr! The Ruffed Grouse flew to the log. All the people gathered around. "I'm only going to do it once, so all of you look sharp," he said, as he straightened his body until his tail touched the log. The tops of his wings were tipped backward so far that the Ruffed Grouse resembled an old man removing his coat. Then he bent his wings so that their tips nearly met in front of his body. It was a queer position and he looked funny. "Now watch!" he said.

Boom — boom — boom — brrrrrrr! came the sound from the wings as the Ruffed Grouse brought their tips together in front of him with

an inward, upward movement, so quickly executed that the eyes of the people there could not follow it. Boom — boom — boom! Faster and faster the wings struck together until there was a great whirring Boom.

"There! That 's all there is to my story." Whirr-rr! and he was gone.

The rest of the people hurried back to the fire, and the Bear piled wood upon it, for the darkness had crept over the Council Ground. The eyes of the Wolf-person glowed green as he said: "I wonder what frightened that Ruffed Grouse." The Mountain Lion looked at the Deer and scared him with his glance. The Deer jumped a log to be farther away from his enemies. In the darkness an uneven row of fiery green eyes looked at the Bear from the deep shadows as he heaped the last of the dry wood upon the dead fire.

"Coog — coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" hooted the Owl.

"Wait, every one!" cried the Bear; for at

the sound of the Owl's voice there was a stir among the people. They knew what the words meant, and they all believed in ghosts.

"Wait! Wait!" begged the Bear. But when the fire blazed up there wasn't a single person in sight. They had run away.

"Well, that's a fine way to do," said the Weasel who had helped to rebuild the fire with his birch bark. "That's a fine way to do."

"Yes, it is," agreed the Bear. "I wonder who started it."

"I don't know," said the Weasel, "but I'm pretty hungry. You can put out this fire alone, I guess. Oh, mercy! Look there!" And he scampered away into the forest. He was gone like a shadow.

Wondering, the Bear looked about. There was no one in sight. The forest was still. What could have scared the people? Who had frightened the Weasel?

The fire began to crackle, and the blaze grew bright in the darkness. The firelight made the

"Wait! Wait!" begged the Bear

shadows outside its circle deeper, for the full moon had gone down behind the tops of the great trees.

"O, dear," sighed the Bear, as he sat down by the fire alone. "O, dear, somebody broke up the Council when I let the fire burn low. And there were a lot of things I wanted to learn. They were talking fine, too. I wonder if I shall ever be able to get those people together again," he added aloud.

"No, you shall not!"

The Bear jumped up as though the Porcupine had struck him with his tail of quills. The voice was in his ear. "No, you shall not," said the thin voice again; and *Old*-man was standing beside him.

The firelight fell upon his wrinkled face, and the long white hair that hung over his naked shoulders. "No, you shall not," he piped. "I scared the people away. I heard the Grouse-person drumming and came to see what was going on here. I scared them away because

they were talking too much. I gave each one of you people a secret when I made you. If I had wanted each to know all about the other, I would not have given them their secrets. Now go away from this fire."

The Bear hung his head and turned away into the shadows. "You 'll never build another fire!" called *Old*-man, as the Bear climbed over a fallen tree. "After this and forever you 'll be afraid of fire."

And he is.

BOOK II

NEAR THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN WHEN THE MOON IS DARK

CHAPTER I

ONE day, long after the Council at the Big Lake had been broken up by *Old*-man, the Weasel met the Bear in the forest. You remember that the Weasel left the Council Ground before the Bear was driven away by *Old*-man; so he knew nothing of what happened later. "Good morning," greeted the Weasel.

"Good morning," returned the Bear, as he stopped to turn over a rotten log in search of mice or ants.

"I haven't seen you since the Council at the Big Lake," said the Weasel. "I 've been laughing ever since at that story the Skunk-person told us. I bet it 's true — every word."

"Of course it 's true," mumbled the Bear, with his nose in the dirt. "Of course it 's true. Why would he lie? That smell the Skunk-person makes could come from no other source than the one he named. You imagine every one has a forked tongue and so speaks falsely."

"Oh, no, I don't," said the Weasel. "What 's the matter with you this morning, anyhow? You look cross and act cross. . . . Pshaw! if you don't want to talk to me, I 'll go on about my business."

"Well, I *am* cross," agreed the Bear. "I *have* been cross ever since we held the Council. There was a lot more I wanted to learn from the people who were there, and now I never shall. O dear! after all my trouble getting the thing started it went wrong — all wrong."

"What do you suppose scared the Grouse-person and the rest?" asked the Weasel, looking behind him apprehensively.

"Oh, I guess you *know* well enough," growled the Bear.

"No, I don't — honest. I thought I saw something and I was nervous. It frightened me and I ran away."

"Well, let 's not talk about it," said the Bear. "If you didn't see anything or anybody to be afraid of, I didn't. Let it go at that."

The Weasel looked at the Bear for a moment without winking; then he said: "I believe you *did* see something that night."

"Suppose I *did?*" snarled the Bear. "Suppose I *did.* What of it? The Council is over." He turned to walk away.

"Wait a minute, brother!" cried the Weasel. "Let's get up another Council — you and I. We can have the fire in the forest."

"Nope," said the Bear, hardly pausing. "Nope, no more fires for me. I'm afraid of fires, and always will be."

"Well, that's funny," replied the Weasel. "Mighty funny. You didn't use to be. You used to ——"

"Yes, I used to — used to have a long tail, but it's short now — so short that everybody makes remarks about it," growled the Bear.

The Weasel thought for a long time, and the Bear went on turning over logs and stones until he was out of sight.

"That person *did* see something that night,"

mused the Weasel. "I guess he saw what *I* saw only *I* got away. My! I wonder if *Old-man* and the Bear had words. I bet they did. Yes, sir, I bet they did. I 'll catch up to the Bear and talk to him, but I 'll be careful what I say. He 's so touchy about it."

He scampered away in the direction the Bear had taken, and caught up to him in a minute. "Here I am again!" he laughed, as the Bear turned and saw him. "Sit down a minute, can't you?"

"What do you want?" asked the Bear, but he didn't sit down.

"I have a plan," said the Weasel. "If you are afraid of fire I 'll build a fire myself. It will be a small one, of course, but that kind won't invite prowlers. You needn't take any hand in the affair, but you can come and sit near the fire, if it 's a small one, can't you?"

"No fires for me," growled the Bear.

"Listen, Brother Bear," urged the Weasel. "I will invite all the small people, like the Fly-

ing Squirrel and the Bats — people we forgot the other time. Besides, there were many at our other Council who didn't have a chance to tell their stories. You 'd like to hear them, wouldn't you?"

The Bear sat down. "Yes, of course I would," he said, "but I 'm scared to death of fire. I ——"

"Well, you can sit in the shadows," interrupted the Weasel. "You can hear every word that is spoken, and I will take all the blame of calling the Council. *Old*-man can't find any fault with you if you just happen along that way and listen, can he?"

"*Old*-man! *Old*-man!" cried the Bear. "So you saw him before I did, that night. That was why you ran away. Ah, ha! Why didn't you warn me, so ——"

"Now, don't get angry, brother," pleaded the Weasel. "I didn't know it was *Old*-man — honest I didn't. I thought maybe it was he, and I was nervous with all that was going on.

Now, listen! I will call another Council myself. I won't connect your name with it in any way. It will be held when the moon is dark — not light — this time, and it will be held up near the foot of the mountains. Come, I will show you just where I shall build my fire. You can find a place near by and be sleeping there on the night of the Council — see?"

The Bear hesitated. *Old*-man frightened him at the Big Lake and he didn't propose to merit his displeasure a second time. "Oh, I guess you 'd better go on about your business," he said. "*Old*-man will hear of it and suspect me right away."

"You won't come, then?" asked the Weasel.

"Nope," said the Bear. "Oh, I 'll go and see where you will build your fire, but I don't want to be mixed up in the affair."

"Well, come on, then, baby. I 'll show you the place, but don't you go and tell on me. If you do I 'll get even with you," declared the Weasel, as he led the way toward the moun-

tains. He didn't know where he would build his fire, because he had not thought of a Council until he met the Bear, but he kept going toward the mountains, pretending that he knew just where he was going.

The Bear didn't suspect that the Weasel was only *looking* for a suitable place for his fire, and kept following until, at last, the Weasel stopped at the foot of a high mountain. There was an open spot in the forest there and the bushes were thick about it. A creek came tumbling down the mountain a little way from the open spot, and the water turned at the foot of the steep hillside, so that the creek flowed along the base of the mountain for a long way, before it headed toward the great river beyond. Birch-trees were plentiful along the creek and ferns grew tall as the Bear's back.

"This is the spot," said the Weasel. "How do you like it?"

"It 's a good place, I should think," returned the Bear, looking with interest at the tall ferns

and thick bushes; "but if it suits you that 's all that 's necessary. The moon will be dark in ten days, so you 'll have to hurry if you have many people here. . . . But that 's none of my business. No more fires for me."

"Well, I thought I 'd show you the place, anyhow," smiled the Weasel. "And while I 'm here I might as well gather some birch bark and some sticks for the fire. Maybe you will help me?" he continued.

"No, sir," snapped the Bear. "No more fires for me. I 'm going back to the river. I wish you luck."

"Oh, all right. Good-by," said the Weasel, as he began to gather birch bark and sticks. "Don't forget the place — that is, if you should change your mind." And he winked cunningly at a frog on the bank of the stream.

But the Bear didn't answer. He started down the creek, for he knew where it emptied into the river. As he went along he looked again at the tall ferns and the thick bushes.

"Ha, ha, ha! O my! O my! The big clumsy coward," laughed the Weasel when the footsteps of the Bear had died away. "Ha, ha, ha! He thinks I believe that he won't come to my Council. Ha, ha, ha! He 'll be the first one here. He 'll be sleeping in those bushes a whole day before I build my fire. I know *him.* He thinks he 's clever; but nothing could keep him from listening to the stories the people will tell. I never knew a person who loved other people's business half so well as the Bear does. Well, if he comes, let him come. I 'll pretend I don't know he 's here. But I know just where he will be — right in that thicket there where he can see and hear as well as anybody. Well, I can't spend any more time standing here. I must gather wood and bark."

He worked until after the sun had gone down and a goodly pile of fuel for the Council fire satisfied him. "There," he said. "If we burn that we can all turn out and gather some more. I 've done more than my share. I 'll be going

back, myself, now. I wonder where the Bear is?" and he laughed.

It was after dark when the Weasel reached the river, but he began to look for his supper as though it were yet daylight. He found the nest of a Ruffed Grouse in some willows, and after scaring the bird from her eggs sucked them.

"There," he said; "that was pretty lucky and I feel fine. Maybe I can find the Bat or the Flying Squirrel. They are both lovers of the night, like myself. I don't want to go back into the forest to-night; so I 'll look along the river for the Bat, I guess."

Night-hawks were flying over the stream, swooping with strange growling sounds under the sky, and the Weasel watched them zigzag from the light into shadows while he waited for the Bat to come along. He knew that the Bat-people like to fly over the water catching small insects in the air; so he found a smooth stone still warm from the sunshine that had gone for the night, and sat upon it.

A Moth, fluttering awkwardly, settled upon the pebbles near the stone and then — presto! it was gone, and so suddenly that even the Weasel's sharp little eyes had not seen it move.

"Hump, that 's queer," he thought. Then a pebble rolled against another, making a noise that the Weasel heard plainly, and a clumsy Toad, fat and warty, changed his position with an effort; wabbling about for a moment, he finally settled down again among the pebbles near the stone, with his eyes bulged out as though he were watching intently for something.

"Hello," said the Weasel. "I didn't see you until you moved. You look almost like a stone, anyhow."

The Toad didn't turn his head, nor even wink. "You say you didn't see me until I moved," he said. "That 's funny. I was right here when you came. I heard you talking to yourself."

"You did?"

"Yes, I did."

"Why don't you laugh, if it 's funny?" asked the Weasel.

"I never laugh," replied the Toad. "I 'm a serious-minded person."

"I guess you are, and the clumsiest thing alive. I don't see how you make a living. You move so slowly that you cannot catch anything alive. That 's certain."

"Can't I?" asked the Toad. "Didn't you see me grab that Moth a minute ago?"

"What?"

"I say, didn't you see me nab that Moth that settled on the stones here?"

"Why, what a yarn!" exclaimed the Weasel. "You didn't even move until after that Moth was gone, and then you made more noise in the pebbles than the Bear makes in the brush. Ha, ha, ha! You must think I 'm foolish. Why, you didn't move. I didn't even know that you were there."

"No, *I* didn't move, but my *tongue* did. Wait — sit still. Here comes another Moth

— shhh! Watch me grab him." But the Moth turned and fluttered over their heads.

"Pshaw!" said the Toad, "I thought that fellow was going to stop here."

"He was afraid of you," laughed the Weasel. "He has seen you run, no doubt."

"Well, there 'll be another along in a minute. This is a good place. I often come here. Here comes a big one! Now watch me."

The Moth settled down not far from the Toad, and the Weasel's eyes were bright as he fixed them upon him. The Toad did not move. A minute slipped slowly by, and the Weasel did not allow his eyes to move from the Moth. But suddenly it was gone — gone as though it had never been there — and yet the Toad had not moved.

"There! That 's how I do it. They say that you are pretty quick, yourself, but can you catch a Bottle-Fly every time, right in the open with nothing behind which to hide. Say, can you?"

"No," admitted the Weasel. "But I am sure you did not move, and I don't think you have stirred yet. I know that the Moth isn't there any more, of course; but I didn't see him go away, either. I don't understand it. You didn't move, did you?"

"No, *I* didn't move, but my *tongue* did. I 'm extremely handy with my tongue," said the Toad, soberly

"I should say you were if you caught that Moth with it. Let's see you do it again. Here comes another one!"

Again a Moth lit near to the Toad, and again it disappeared; and that time the Weasel thought he saw something snatch the insect, but he couldn't be sure. Besides he thought he heard the Toad smack his lips.

"There, that 's easy when you know how," said the Toad. "'You haven't moved,' I suppose you 'll say, but my *tongue* did. It 's a pretty easy way to make a living, isn't it? You have noticed that I 'm always fat, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have," agreed the Weasel, "and I want you to come to our Council, will you?"

"When?"

"When the moon is dark."

"Where?"

"Up at the foot of the mountains. Follow the creek till you come to the place where it comes off the mountainside. I 'll be there."

"Oh, that 's too far for me," said the Toad. "It would take me all summer to get there and back here again. Sit still; here comes a Bug of some kind, and I need a change. I got him! It was a Beetle. I don't care for Beetles very much," he blinked.

"You 'd have a good time at that Council," promised the Weasel.

"I suppose I would, but it 's too far," said the Toad, moving a little.

"Start now," urged the Weasel. "It 's worth your while. The people will all be there, and there will be story-telling. You will find a pile of birch bark and considerable wood on the

spot where the Council is to be held; so you 'll know the place if you get there ahead of time. The bark and the wood is for our fire. I gathered it myself. And remember that fires at night attract a lot of Bugs and Moths. You 'll catch more in a minute there than you can in a week around here. You 'll like the stories, too. I am sure that you do not know why the Bat-people have fur like the Mouse and Fly like the Birds?"

"No, I don't," admitted the Toad. "I wish I did. The Bat is a good deal like a Mouse with wings. I wonder why?"

"Come to the Council and learn why," advised the Weasel. "And maybe you can tell us a queer thing or two, yourself," he added, cunningly.

"Maybe," agreed the Toad, soberly.

"Well, will you come? The Flying Squirrel will be there and you know that he is a queer person and shy."

"Yes, I know he is. Did he tell you that

he 'd come?" asked the Toad, watching a Moth fluttering past him.

"Yes, he is coming, of course," declared the Weasel, and chuckled to himself at his cleverness in dodging the question.

"Well, I guess I 'll be there, then, if I can get there in time. I 'll start this minute. I 've about finished my supper, anyhow. Good-by" — and he crawled awkwardly away from the stone, hopping once in a while when the ground was favorable.

It was a long time before he reached the point where the creek emptied its water into the river, and the Weasel watched the Toad's tumbling crawl until the bushes hid him.

"My!" said the Weasel to himself, "if I couldn't move faster than that fellow I 'd starve to death, but that tongue of his is swift-moving enough. I 'm glad that I 'm not a Blue-bottle Fly or a Moth. I wonder how the Toad lives in the winter-time. I wish I had thought to ask him. There are no Flies in the winter, and

to sit around and wait, as he does, would be impossible in the cold, even if there were Flies to catch. I didn't think to ask him about the winter. How stupid of me! I 'll overtake him and learn something."

He jumped from the stone that was cooling in the night breeze, and scampered after the Toad. In a minute he saw him crawling slowly through the bushes that grew along the creek.

"Hello!" he called.

"Hello," answered the Toad. "Do you think I can reach the Council Ground within ten days?"

"Oh, yes," said the Weasel, "if you keep going. You have already travelled quite a distance" — and he smiled. "Say, I have been wondering about you since you left me down by the river, and I can't see how you live in the winter-time."

"How does the Bear live?" asked the Toad, still crawling his way up the creek.

"Oh, the Bear sleeps," replied the Weasel,

keeping at the side of the Toad by walking slowly.

"So do I," said the Toad. "I sleep without waking to eat, as he does, only I can go longer without food than he can."

"Where do you sleep, I wonder?"

"Oh, in cracks in the mud where swamps have dried up, or in caves — lots of places," said the Toad.

"Well, you are lucky. That's what I told the Bear once, but he thinks he'd rather be able to travel about in the winter than to sleep. You see *Old*-man made him to sleep in the winter because the ground is frozen, and the Bear can't dig roots or travel in the snow. His legs are too short and his body is too heavy."

"I couldn't live in the snow, either," replied the Toad. "I'm satisfied to sleep. I like to sleep, but I won't get much rest if I am to reach the Council Ground within ten days, and talking takes time."

The Weasel took the hint and turned back.

"Good night," he called. "We shall have a good time at the Council. I 'll see you there."

"That Weasel-person is surely inquisitive," thought the Toad. "I guess that he makes his living by being inquisitive, though, for I 've seen him going in and coming out of empty holes everywhere. He 's busy all the time. He is glad that he isn't a Toad, and I am equally pleased that I 'm not a Weasel. Now look at that log right in my way, and there is no bark on it. I can't climb over it, so I 'll have to go around it. I hope it isn't a long log."

The Weasel had returned to the river after leaving the Toad-person, and, again finding the stone, sat down to wait for the Bat. He was satisfied with what he had already done, for he felt sure that the Toad would have something to tell at the Council — something new and strange.

It was quite dark and the only streak of light was over the river, where the water reflected the stars. "I don't see where the Bat-person

can be," thought the Weasel; but just then he saw the Bat flying in a crooked, crazy way up the river.

"Hey, you Bat-person! Wait a minute!" he called.

The Bat wheeled, and, flying over the Weasel, asked: "What do you want?"

"I want to invite you to a big Council," replied the Weasel. "Come down here a minute, can't you?"

"I can, but I won't," said the Bat. "I don't like you very well." He fluttered over the stone, nevertheless, and the cunning Weasel, pretending that he didn't care if the Bat did go away, began washing his face with his paw.

"What sort of a Council is it, anyhow?" inquired the Bat, swooping nearer.

"Oh, the people are going to gather up near the Big Mountain to tell funny stories. But you don't seem to be interested," replied the Weasel, smoothing the fur on his paw with his tongue. "The Toad-person has already started

for the Council Ground, although the meeting is ten days distant. But he is anxious to be there. You catch flies yourself, but that Toad-person is so much quicker than you are that your fly-catching seems very tame — extremely awkward, I should say."

"Is that so?" asked the Bat with sarcasm.

"Yes, sir, that is true, but you do not appear to care to learn how he came to possess his strange power."

"When is the Council to be held?" asked the Bat, settling on a stone near to the Weasel.

"When the moon is dark, ten nights from now."

"Where did you say you were going to hold it?" inquired the Bat.

The Weasel told him. "I 'm looking for the Flying Squirrel," he said. "I was waiting for the night to grow older before setting out into the timber to seek him, when you came along. I thought I might as well ask you, too, but if you ——"

"Oh, I 'll come," interrupted the Bat. "I 'll be there. Good night" — and away he went.

"Well, I made him think that I didn't care much if he didn't come," laughed the Weasel. "That 's the way to handle people who think they are important. Now, if I could only find the Flying Squirrel-person I would be satisfied and take a nap."

He hopped from the stone, ran away into the forest, and, finding a hollow tree, smelled around it for a time and then sat down to wait. "He 's in there, all right, but if I go in after him he 'll believe I 'm going to try to kill him, so I 'll just wait until he comes out," he said.

It was quiet in the dark forest, and the Weasel could hear the footsteps of night-prowling forest-people as he sat by the hollow tree, waiting for the Flying Squirrel to come out. Suddenly there came a deep voice, calling: "Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!"

"That 's the Owl-person," murmured the Weasel. "I wish he wouldn't do that. The

Flying Squirrel is as much afraid of him as he is of me. I 'll just slip over there and ask the Owl to go away." He moved swiftly, for he was afraid that the Flying Squirrel-person would come out of the hollow tree while he was gone. "Say, Owl-person!" he called. "I wish you would go away from here. I am waiting for the Flying Squirrel to come out of a hollow tree, and he won't come if he hears your voice."

"Well, why don't you go in after him if you want him?" asked the Owl. "You can go into any hole that he can live in."

"I don't want to hurt him. I have some business with him — that 's all. You see, I want to talk to him in a friendly way. That 's why I am waiting for him to come out."

"Well, one tree 's as good as another," replied the Owl. "I 'll move if it will please you"; and on silent wings that carried him through the forest like a swift-moving shadow the Owl flew away.

The Weasel ran back to the hollow tree, and

almost as soon as he reached it the Flying Squirrel stuck out his head.

"Hello, brother!" greeted the Weasel. "It 's a fine night. Come out and talk to me."

"No, sir," replied the Flying Squirrel. "I don't like you and never did. Besides, I never shall like you" — and he pulled his head back out of sight.

"Pshaw!" laughed the Weasel; "if I wanted to chase you out of that hole I could easily do so, but I want to invite you to a big Council. That is what I came here to do, and that is why I have waited here for you. I even asked the Owl-person to go away from here so that you wouldn't be frightened by his voice. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, I can hear you," answered the Flying Squirrel, "and if you will move farther away from my tree I 'll come out."

"All right," agreed the Weasel, and he moved away. "Come on," he called; "I 've moved."

The Flying Squirrel came out of his hole in

the hollow tree. "Now what about the Council?" he asked.

"Well, it 's this way," began the Weasel. "Some time ago the Bear and I called a Council, and it was a success until some of the forest-people got scared at something and ran away. We learned many things and heard a lot of funny stories, too. We didn't hear half that might have been told; and so I am calling this Council, and inviting the smaller people to come. Your ways are peculiar, and I thought perhaps you would tell us How It Came About. I mean, in view of the fact that the Toad and the Bat and many other queer people will tell how they came to possess their peculiarities, that you would tell us how you came by your funny wings."

"They are not wings," said the Flying Squirrel. "I can't really fly."

"I know that," replied the Weasel, "but you sail. I 've seen you jump from one tree to another, and you jump a long way — farther

than the Pine Squirrel or the Chipmunk-person."

"Oh, yes, that 's true," agreed the Flying Squirrel; "and I 'll come if you will promise to let me alone and see that the Mink — will he be there, do you suppose?" He broke off, worried.

"Maybe," said the Weasel, "but there will be no quarrelling. That 's agreed."

"Well, I 'll come, then. Where is it to be — the Council?"

"Up at the foot of the Big Mountain. Follow the creek until you come to the place where the water is falling down its side. You 'll find me there."

"When is it to be?"

"At the dark of the moon."

"All right. I 'll come," said the Flying Squirrel, "and I 'll tell about my wings, as you call them, if the rest tell their secrets."

"Good night," said the Weasel. "It 's getting late, and I have a long way to go. My wife isn't feeling very well, and I ought to be

home." He turned away. Then he stopped. "Say," he called back, "if you see any strange people that you think should be invited to the Council, don't hesitate to ask them. I 'd like to have them come."

"All right," answered the Flying Squirrel. "I might run across the Tree Toad. Have you invited him?"

"No, I never thought of the Tree Toad-person. Ask him by all means. He 's queer, and we want him to come."

"All right; if I see him I 'll ask him," promised the Flying Squirrel. "Good night."

"Well, that 's two; and perhaps the Flying Squirrel will invite the Tree Toad. That will make three," mused the Weasel. "I 've got to work hard if I succeed in getting a crowd to that Council. I can see that plainly."

He did not go home, but found a hollow log and crawled in to take a nap. He had told the Flying Squirrel that his wife was ill, but that

was not true. He often stayed out all night, so his wife would not notice his failure to come home. It was warm and cosy in the hollow log, and there was a nest of feathers there that some other of the small forest-people had made, and he curled up in the nest and went to sleep. Out in the forest, in the top of a great pine-tree, the Owl called: "Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" time and time again, but the Weasel didn't hear him.

It was past midnight when there was a stir among the dead leaves near the end of the hollow log, and a Bob-tailed Mole crawled into the hole. He was going to bed, and ran on into the hollow log, thinking of a talk that he had just had with a Deer-mouse. He reached his nest of feathers and saw the Weasel asleep there. "Mercy!" he cried, and turned about to scamper away as fast as he could run. "After dodging the Owl and getting away from two Hawks and a Mink since three o'clock this afternoon, I come home to my bed and find

the worst person in the world sleeping in it. Mercy!"

"Wait, Brother Mole," called the Weasel, awakening. "Wait a minute; I want to talk to you."

"No, sir," replied the Mole, running away. "I don't want to have anything to do with you. You kill my people and you nearly caught me, but you can't catch me now," he called from a log where he had stopped.

"I don't want to catch you, brother. I wanted to ask you to come to a Council at the foot of the Big Mountain," said the Weasel, from the top of the hollow log. "All the queer forest-people, mostly the smaller ones, will be there, you see, and they are going to tell us How It Came About Stories."

"What do you mean by How It Came About Stories?" asked the Bob-tailed Mole, curiously.

"Well, it's this way. The Toad-person catches flies and still he is clumsy. He will tell us how he does it — see?"

"Oh, pshaw! I know how he does it," broke in the Bob-tailed Mole. "He catches them with his tongue."

"Yes, but how did he come to possess that queer tongue?"

"I don't know, I 'm sure," replied the Bob-tailed Mole.

"Of course you don't, but he will tell us at the Council, and all the people there will tell us something that we didn't know before. Now *you* have a queer tail, Brother Mole, and we 'd all like to know How It Came About — see?"

"Oh!"

"Yes — that 's it," said the Weasel, encouragingly. "They 'll all be there. I 've just had a talk with the Flying Squirrel and the Bat, and the Flying Squirrel said that he 'd ask the Tree Toad-person, himself. The Big Toad is on his way to the Council Ground now."

"When is the Council to be held?" asked the Bob-tailed Mole.

"When the moon is dark," replied the Weasel, "but you see the Toad-person travels so slowly that he has already started."

"Oh, I 'd like to go, but my enemies will all be there, and if I went I 'd never get away alive. They never tell the truth, my enemies don't. No, I won't take the chance," declared the Mole.

"There will be no quarrelling and everybody shall have six hours free from trouble from his enemies after the Council is over. That 's agreed," promised the Weasel.

"Six hours?" asked the Bob-tailed Mole. "Well, if that 's the agreement, I 'll come."

"Good," said the Weasel. "Just follow the creek till you come to the place. I 'll be there. And now, if you want your bed, you may have it, for I have slept enough and I have work to do. Good night," he called, "and don't forget the time nor the place."

"I won't," answered the Mole, crawling cautiously toward his hollow log. Then all

was quiet in the forest once more and the Bob-tailed Mole went to sleep.

"Well! That was lucky," said the Weasel to himself, "I never thought of the Bob-tailed Mole and he makes four. Now if I can find my friend the Bob-cat, I 'll ask him. It 's funny, but the Mole's tail made me think of the Bob-cat. I wonder where he can be. Down by the river most likely. I 'll go down there and look around."

He went back to the river and followed along its bank in the thick willows, but could find no trace of the Bob-cat there. "I guess he must be along here some place," he said aloud. "I 'll just keep going on until I find him."

Suddenly he heard a great fluttering of wings and stopped. "That 's the Bob-cat, I am sure," he thought. "He 's caught a Ruffed Grouse."

The sound had come from an especially dense thicket, and he made his way into it. All was quiet now; but soon he saw the Bob-cat eating

a Ruffed Grouse as he had suspected. "Hello, brother," he called cheerily.

The Bob-cat looked up and snarled. "Go about your business. I 'm not going to divide with you," he said. "I had a hard time catching this bird and I 'm hungry."

"I don't want you to divide with me, brother," replied the Weasel, stopping near the Bob-cat. "I have been looking for you to tell you that we are going to have a Council at the foot of the Big Mountain, and to ask you to come — that 's all."

"A Council?" asked the Bob-cat, spitting some feathers from his mouth. "What kind of a Council?"

"Oh, a story-telling Council," replied the Weasel. "You know the Toad is ugly-looking and awkward, yet he can catch a Blue-bottle Fly in the sunshine. Nobody else can do that as easily as he does, and he is going to tell us How It Came About — see? Then all the others will have stories to tell concerning their

peculiar powers, and we shall learn many things that we did not know before. I wish you 'd come."

"I haven't any great peculiarity," said the Bob-cat with his sharp claws fast in the flesh of the dead Ruffed Grouse. "Why should I go to the Council?"

"To hear what the others tell," returned the Weasel, "and, besides, you are spotted all over. How did it come about?"

"Oh, my spots interest you, do they?" asked the Bob-cat. "Well, I know how I came by them, and if I told you you wouldn't believe me."

"Yes, I would," the Weasel hastened to say. "And if you will come and tell us the story, you will be repaid by hearing others that are as strange and hard to believe as your own. Will you come?"

"When is it?"

"When the moon is dark. That 's ten nights from now — only it 's almost morning."

"All right, I 'll come," agreed the Bob-cat, "but I want to eat this Grouse now if you will go away."

"I 'll count on you, then, shall I?" asked the Weasel, turning to go away.

"Yes, I 'll be there."

"Follow the creek until you come to the place," said the Weasel. "Good night — and say, if you see anybody with peculiarities, ask him to come, will you?"

"Yes," promised the Bob-cat, "but not many of the small people like me very well."

"I know that, and they are not in love with me, either," laughed the Weasel, "but *Old-man* made us and told us both what to do, and we do it. I don't see why they blame us so much."

"Nor do I," replied the Bob-cat. "Good night, and if I see the Gopher, I 'll ask him to come to the Council. He hates me, but he 's the only person I know who goes to sleep in the month of August and sleeps until spring.

He 's lots worse than the Bear for sleeping. I wonder why?"

"Say, be sure and do that — ask him, by all means," urged the Weasel, "and tell him that there will be no quarrelling. There will be six hours given to everybody to find his home after the Council is adjourned. Be sure to tell him that, for he 's an awful coward."

"I guess you 'd be a coward if you were the Gopher," replied the Bob-cat, "but I 'll ask him. Good night."

The Weasel went out of the thicket. "That makes two more. I 'm doing well," he chuckled. "Now who else ought I to ask, I wonder? There is no use in staying here any longer; I 'll go back into the forest and find something for breakfast before the sun comes up."

He did not have far to go until he came to the forest; and almost as soon as he had entered it he saw the Bear talking to the Hard-shell Turtle on the edge of a swamp.

"Now what 's the Bear-person up to, I won-

der?" thought the Weasel as he ran along a log that reached into the water of the swamp. "I 'll find out," he said to himself. And stopping on the log not far from the water he called, "Good morning."

The Turtle answered, but the Bear looked as though he had been caught in some questionable act and growled, "How are you?"

"I 'm fine," laughed the Weasel, "but what are you doing here so early."

"I 'm minding my own business," answered the Bear gruffly.

"He was telling me of a Council up at the foot of the Big Mountain," said the Turtle. "I guess there 's no secret about it. He advises me to attend, but I am a slow traveller and the foot of the Big Mountain is quite a way from here."

"Not so far," replied the Weasel, with a cunning glance at the Bear. "The Toad is slow — much slower than you are, and he has already started for the Council Grounds."

"Is that so?" inquired the Turtle.

"Yes, upon my word, he has started," declared the Weasel.

"Well, I must be getting along," growled the Bear. "You two can talk, if you want to," and he left the swamp.

The Weasel noted the direction he had taken and then turned to talk to the Turtle. "So the Bear has invited you to come to the Council, has he?" he asked.

"Yes, and I 'm going," said the Turtle. "If the Toad-person can reach the place in time, I 'm sure that I can. The Bear said it would be great fun, and I am willing to tell how I came to have my shell if the rest will talk."

"They will," promised the Weasel. "Say, why don't you travel up the creek in the water?"

"It 's too swift for me," answered the Turtle.

"Maybe it is," agreed the Weasel, "but start right away, won't you?"

"Yes, this afternoon. I 'll be there. Good-by."

"Good-by, Brother Turtle," called the Weasel, anxious to overtake the Bear.

He knew that he would have to be extremely careful not to offend him, but he could not refrain from engaging him in conversation regarding the coming Council. "Oh, this is a great joke," he laughed. "The Bear says that he will not come to my Council, and yet he is inviting people to be there. He thinks that I believe he will not attend. But I was sure that nothing could keep him away, and now I know it. Ha, ha, ha! There he is now, the big lout! Hello!" he called. "I ran to overtake you to express my thanks for your kindness in inviting the Turtle-person to my Council. It 's really too bad that you can't come yourself."

The Bear sat down to scratch a spot back of his ear with his hind paw. "Well, I am not going to your Council, but I thought I 'd help you by asking the smaller people I ran across, that is, without putting myself to any trouble," he said.

"That is exceedingly good of you, and I will tell you what is said around the fire to pay for it," promised the Weasel.

"Oh, I 'm not interested," mumbled the Bear. "It 's your affair. I expect to be on the other side of the Mountain when the moon is dark. I have a friend over there and he expects me."

"I 'm sorry you feel about fire as you do," sympathized the Weasel, with a cunning look in his eyes.

"Well, I do," returned the Bear. "Don't even mention fire to me. I shall never go near fire again — never."

"Have you — or — did you — now — I was going to ask you if you had happened to run across any other strange people besides the Turtle, without taking any extra trouble?" stammered the Weasel. But his faltering speech was assumed, for he was but playing with the Bear.

"No!" snapped the Bear; "or, yes — maybe. You 'll see on the night of your Council" — and he walked away.

"Oh, ha-ha-ha-he-he-he," laughed the Weasel, after the Bear had disappeared. "He 's my messenger — my helper — the Bear is, and I shall not have to work very hard to get a crowd at my Council. I know just where he will be! I saw the very spot and I saw him looking at it. Very well, Brother Bear, remember that those who listen secretly hear but little good of themselves, and I am sure that your ears will burn on the night of the Council. Well, I 'm going to look for something to eat."

The sun was up now, and his light was stealing into the dark places in the great forest, driving away the shadows and drinking the crystal drops of dew on the green leaves of plants, and even from the bright-colored petals of wild flowers that grew plentifully in the rich, sandy soil of the timber lands. The Weasel, in his brown coat, could scarcely be seen as he began to hunt for his breakfast among the dead logs and roots of trees that had been blown down by the wind. At last, finding a Rabbit's

burrow, he crept into it, and in a minute there was a frightened cry down deep in the hole in the ground, but nothing came out for a long time, and then it was the wicked Weasel himself who crept out of the Rabbit's burrow, blinked in the bright sunlight a moment, and ran away.

Shall I tell you what he had done? He had killed the Rabbit, sucked his blood, eaten ever so little of the tender meat, and then left the place feeling that he had done no wrong.

The morning was splendid. Sunbeams slanted away into thickets, and in a gentle breeze spots of shade and sunshine danced on the ground beneath giant trees. The air was full of the pleasant sounds of bird-song. The Weasel stopped to listen to a Hermit Thrush that perched on the limb of a bush above him, and heard the Yellowhammers calling in their laughing way as they drummed their signals to one another from the dry tops of pine-trees — signals that only the Yellowhammer-people know.

Suddenly the Hermit Thrush ceased his singing, and the Weasel saw the Lynx go by. Finally, while yet the Thrush was silent, the Skunk-person passed and so did the Porcupine, but the Weasel only said "Good morning" to each, for they had attended the Council at the Big Lake and had told their stories. At last the Hermit Thrush flew away, and the Weasel went on. He stopped to joke with the Chipmunk, but there was a Spider's web across the entrance to his hole. "Ah, ha!" thought the cunning Weasel, "the Chipmunk-person is not at home — hasn't been home for some time, or the Spider wouldn't set a Fly-trap in his doorway. I do hope that nothing has happened to my friend with the striped clothes, but every one must take care of himself, I suppose."

It was past noon when he came to the spot at the foot of the Big Mountain where he had piled the birch bark and the sticks for his fire. There was no one there, of course. He gathered more of the bark and wood, and while he was

And the Weasel saw the Lynx go by

thus employed he heard a cracking sound in the dry brush and stopped to listen. "Ah, ha!" he said to himself, "that 's the Bear, I 'll bet. He can't stay away. Well, I won't let him see me this time" — and he hid in a hole in a log.

The Bear came to the spot and dropped several small sticks of wood on the pile. He was afraid to add any large pieces, lest the Weasel suspect him. Then he went to look at the spot where he intended to hide on the night of the Council, and the Weasel ran away, chuckling to himself.

"I 'll rest," he said. "The Bear is doing the work, so I will let him do it. Anybody he invites will be satisfactory to me." He was passing a cliff of rock and there was a cave that reached far back into the mountain there. A hole of any kind is a great temptation to the Weasel; so he went into the cave to look around. His nose caught a peculiar odor as he entered, and then he saw a small pile of odds and ends of everything near the back of the cave. "Now

this is luck," he said, for the Weasel talks to himself a great deal. "The Mountain Rat lives here and I 'll wait for his return. He is a queer person, who gathers things for which he can have no possible use. I 'll ask him to come to the Council and tell us How It Came About. My! I don't like his smell very well."

It was very dark in the cave; but the Weasel can see in darkness, so he sat down to wait for the return of the Mountain Rat. Water was dripping from a seam in the roof, and there was a tiny pool just under it that caught each clear, cold drop as it fell from the top of the cave. He began to count the drops. "One — two — three — four. Oh, mercy!" he cried at last, as the regular plop — plop — plop — plop of the drops exasperated him. "I 'd go crazy if I lived here with that everlasting drip, drip, drip in my ears night and day, forever. My, I wish he 'd come! I want to get out of this place."

The wind, stirring outside, made a strange, moaning sound at the mouth of the cave, and

then the Weasel saw a gray object scurrying along the floor toward him. Suddenly it stopped, and two fiery eyes peered at him in the darkness.

"Hello," said the Weasel. "I was waiting for you."

"Well, if you wait for me to come back you 'll wait a long time," returned the Mountain Rat, running away.

"Wait, brother — wait!" called the Weasel.

"I 'm no brother of yours, fellow," cried the frightened Rat. "I 'm no relation at all, and not even an acquaintance."

He was gone, and again the Weasel could hear only the plop — plop — plop of the dropping water.

"Why, the smelly coward!" he laughed, and ran to the mouth of the cave and looked about. The light was bright after being in the dark cave so long. Presently he saw the Mountain Rat sitting on a stone not far away. "I was going to invite you to a big Council at the foot

of the Big Mountain when the moon is dark," called the Weasel. "All the queer people will be there. But you don't seem to care to listen to me," he continued, as he turned and pretended he was going away.

"What 's it for, the Council?" asked the Rat.

"Why, it 's an entertainment for those who are invited," replied the Weasel, still moving slowly away. "I am not inviting everybody, either," he continued. "And you are the first one that failed to show interest in the affair. Good afternoon."

"Wait a minute, can't you?" called the Rat. "You know that you are no friend of mine; at least, I know it, and coming home to find you there is enough to upset a person. Tell me more about the Council. What are the people going to do there?"

"They are going to tell How It Came About that they possess their peculiar powers or strange habits — all of them," replied the Weasel, stopping.

"I haven't any strange power," declared the Mountain Rat.

"No, perhaps you haven't," agreed the Weasel, "but you own a desire to possess everything that you can drag or carry away, whether it is of worth to you or not. It doesn't seem to make any difference. You 're a thief who steals for the love of stealing, and we 'd like to know How It Came About."

"Oh, is that it?"

"Yes."

"I have to do such things."

"I know it, or you wouldn't do them," agreed the Weasel, "but How It Came About is what we want to know — see?"

"Umhu."

"Well?"

"I 'll come," promised the Rat. "I 'm glad that you asked me."

The Weasel went away, leaving the Mountain Rat to himself. He hopped upon a fallen tree to run along its length because of the roughness

of the ground. There were limbs still on the fallen tree, and suddenly he ran into a Spider's web that had been cunningly stretched between two of them to catch Flies. The web stuck to his face and he stopped, impatiently, to rub it away. "I hate Spiders' webs," he said, while he continued to brush his face and whiskers to free them from the close-clinging, almost invisible threads. "They 're so sticky and tickly and —" He sat up suddenly and looked about. "I know what I 'll do. I 'll ask the Spider to come to the Council. He 's a queer person and can tell us How It Came About that he sets his web-traps to catch Flies. I don't like his ways for I 'm always running into his webs in the forest, even across the entrances of hollow logs. I wonder where he is?" he said aloud.

"I 'm right here," spoke the Spider from one of the dead limbs. "You have broken my web, and now I shall have to spin it again. It was in a good place, too; I caught two Flies with it this morning."

"I 'm sorry, Brother Spider," replied the Weasel, "but I didn't see your web. I don't like to run into webs because they stick to my face, and if I had seen this one of yours I would have gone around it. Honest I would."

"Everybody breaks my webs," grumbled the Spider, "and it takes much time and work to spin them. I live by making webs."

"Yes, I know you are a trapper and I 'm glad that I am not a Fly, for your webs are so fine and wonderful that only in the sunlight that glints on the shiny threads you spin can any person see them. I 've seen you drop from tall trees dangling at the end of so fine a thread that I wondered how it could hold your weight, and I've seen you blown by the wind still holding to your silvery strand. It 's wonderful, I think."

"Oh, the winds help me to set my traps. They often carry me and the end of the thread that I am spinning to the place where I want to fasten the web," said the Spider. "Where are you going?"

"I was looking for *you*," lied the Weasel. "That is, I was looking for queer people," he corrected himself, remembering that the Spider had heard him talk aloud. "I want to ask you to come to a Council that is to be held at the dark of the moon at the foot of the Big Mountain. Will you come?"

"What sort of a Council?" asked the Spider.

Then the Weasel told him all about it and said: "We 'd like to know how you came to set your net-traps in the forest, and how you came by the power to spin threads as strong as yours are and yet so fine that they can scarcely be seen."

"I wish they were strong enough to bruise the noses of people who break them," declared the Spider. "Did you say the Toad-person would be there?"

"Yes. He 's on his way now," said the Weasel.

"Well, he 's a fly-catcher himself, and I 'd like to hear his story."

"I should say that he was a fly-catcher," laughed the Weasel. "Will you come?"

"Yes, I guess so," said the Spider. "But just now I must fix up the web that you have broken, if you are through talking."

"Good-by," bowed the Weasel, taking the hint. "I 'll see you at the Council," he called as he ran on down to the small end of the fallen tree and then jumped to the ground. "He 'll have something to tell, I 'm sure," he thought. "I 'm glad I ran into his old web, for it made me think of him. I wonder how many people the Bear has invited? My! but I 'm tired," he yawned. "I guess I 'll go home. I haven't been there in ever so long. My wife will be cross, no doubt, but I 'll explain, I 'll explain. The Bear and other people will spread the news of the coming Council. Yes, I 'll go home and rest."

He did not go out the next day looking for people to invite, nor the next, nor even the next, but slept a good deal and rested.

Almost before he realized it the time arrived for the meeting at the foot of the Big Mountain, and early on the morning of the Council he went to the spot where he had piled the wood. The pile had grown and he knew that the Bear had been busy; but he was careful not to go near the spot where he was sure the big fellow was lying. "I just know he 's there," he chuckled, "but I 'll pretend that I don't. I wonder how many people will come to-night?"

"Hello!" The voice was behind him, and he turned to behold the Toad, who said: "I 'm here, you see — got here this morning."

"Good," smiled the Weasel. "Take a nap and rest now, for it will be a long time before the others arrive."

"Well, *I 'm* here!" called the Hard-shell Turtle, tumbling over a stick, "and I passed the Tree Toad down there a little way."

"Can he make it in time?" asked the Weasel anxiously.

"Oh, yes. He 's got all day for it," answered

the Turtle, sliding into the creek, where the water eddied against the bank. "I 'll wait here, I guess," he said. "It 's cooler."

The Weasel laid his fire ready for lighting, talking pleasantly to the Toad the while, but the Toad didn't answer. He was sound asleep. The Weasel found it hard not to take a peep at the Bear, but he refrained and spent his time clearing the ground of all sticks and pebbles, around the spot that he had selected for the fire. At last the sun went down behind the Big Mountain and the evening breeze sprang up to cool the world. The shadows crept out of the bushes, growing bolder every minute, and finally covered the Council Ground with their cloak of darkness. "It 's time to light my fire now," said the Weasel. "Wake up, Brother Toad. This party is about to begin."

The Toad opened his eyes just as the blaze brightened among the small twigs and bark that the Weasel had carefully laid. "I guess I 've been asleep," he said.

"You guess you have?" laughed the Weasel. "Well, I *know* you have. Here comes the Tree Toad! Welcome to the Council, brother!" he cried joyfully, as the little Tree Toad crawled toward the fire, blinking in its light.

The forest was black now, and the fire made a ring of light that kept the shadows away, but yet no other people had arrived. The Weasel was growing anxious, but soon they began to come. He greeted each as they found a place by the fire, and when quite a time had passed after the latest arrival, he arose and said:

"Brothers all, I have asked you to come here to listen to How It Came About Stories, and to tell us your secrets concerning your peculiar powers. You all know why this Council was called, and I need not explain further than to say that everything that is told here will be considered confidential and be kept secret among ourselves. I shall begin the evening's entertainment by calling on the Bob-cat first, he being the largest of the forest-people about our

fire. Brother Bob-cat, be good enough to start this Council by telling us how and why you came to wear a spotted coat. I beg you to withhold nothing, even though it may sound unbelievable or ridiculous." He turned and put a few sticks upon the fire, and, when they began to burn, the Bob-cat arose and walked a few steps forward.

CHAPTER II

"BROTHER WEASEL and Forest-folk," he said, bowing to those about the fire, "the story of my spots is a sorry one, indeed. I have never told it, but in view of the fact that you are all to tell your secrets, I shall reveal to you how I came by my spots.

"Perhaps you may know that all of our relations, the Mountain Lion, the Lynx, and the other Cat-people are spotted when they are born; but not all of them wear their spots throughout their lives, as I do. The young Lynx is not so spotted as the kitten of the Mountain Lion, but there are spots, if you look for them, and all because of what I shall now tell you in confidence. It is hard to be obliged to confess that one is a thief, or that he has been a thief, yet I must begin my story by such a confession.

"I was hungry and the season was bad. The forests were dried up and the plains were worse. Rabbits and Grouse had left the country and I was afraid that I would die of hunger, when one day I saw a Person fishing in the Big River that flows through the level lands. I watched the Person for a long time, and saw him catch several fish, which he strung upon a willow. He did not stop to eat them, but continued his fishing, catching more and still more fine fish until there were a great number strung on the willow which was lying on the stones behind him. I could smell them, for the wind was blowing toward me, and it made me hungrier than ever; so I ran up the stream, and, finding a good place, crawled down to the stones behind the fishing Person. He did not hear me, for I can walk silently, and my eyes are much better than my nose. I began to creep toward the string of fish, thinking that I would steal only one, but when I reached out and hooked my sharp claws into a big one, the whole string was

pulled toward me. I could not get the fish loose from the willow, so I ate him there. Then I ate another and yet another. I was even beginning on the fourth when the Person caught a big one, and, turning around, saw me eating his fish.

"It was nearly dark, and I had not noticed who the Person was until he turned his face toward me. Then I saw that it was *Old*-man, and I was frightened. I ran as fast as I could, but I had eaten three large fish and part of another, and I wasn't able to run swiftly. He struck at me, and that was the blow that cost me my tail. It was long and handsome before then, and I wasn't called the Bob-cat until after that night.

"*Old*-man followed me over the plains and mountains in the darkness, and every time he drew near enough he punched me with the end of a burned stick. 'Take that — and that!' he would say at each thrust of the stick. I cried out, for I was suffering terribly, but he

punched and punched with the blackened end of the stick until I was spotted all over. Some of the black faded out and left only rings that are darker than the rest of my coat, but most of them remained black, and do to this day. I was sure that *Old*-man would take my life, but at last I saw a small hole in some rocks, and ran into it. *Old*-man couldn't get into the hole, but stopped outside and called: 'Which one of the Cat-people are you?'

"I kept still.

"'I say, which of the Cat-people are you that ate my fish?'

"Still I didn't answer.

"'All right,' he said. 'You 'll be spotted — all of you — to pay for this.' And we are — all of us — but my spots are plainer to see than those of the others, because it was I that *Old*-man poked with his stick, and everywhere the blackened stick poked me is a spot.

"I didn't see him for a long time after he had punished me, but when he saw me he

knew it was I that had stolen his fish, because my tail was gone. That 's How It Came About."

CHAPTER III

THE Bob-cat sat down, and the Weasel arose from his place and said: "Brother, we have enjoyed your story and thank you for it. I, for one, believe every word of it to be true. But you are not the only thief in the world, by any means, nor the greatest.

"That there may not seem to be favoritism shown here by me, as your chairman, I shall now call upon the least among us — I mean the least in size, for while he is tiny he is still great in accomplishment. You have all seen the webs that our brother, the Spider, weaves in the forest, and you have marvelled at his skill, as I have, but you cannot possibly know how he came to possess the power to make those webs. That secret is his own, and I ask him now to come forward and tell us How It Came About."

The Spider crawled toward the fire, which the

Weasel had brightened by additions of birch bark, and began:

"Our good brother, the Weasel, has said that the Bob-cat is not the only thief in the world, nor yet the greatest, and that is quite true. The Bear is a greater thief than the Bob-cat, and, besides, he has always been a thief."

The Weasel tossed more bark upon the fire, glancing toward the spot in the tall ferns where he knew the Bear was lying, and with a broad grin on his cunning little face, said: "I beg your pardon, Brother Spider, but the fire was growing dim."

"I do not like the Bear-person," continued the Spider. "He goes lumbering through the forests, breaking my webs faster than I can weave them. He is anything but a gentleman, and I wish him bad luck.

"The Bob-cat has told us that *Old*-man treated him badly, but he has been kind to me, as I shall show you. It was on a hot summer day. Not a breath of air was stirring. Heat

The Spider said: "The Weasel has said that the Bob-cat is not the only thief in the world"

shimmered along the streams and the birds were close to the water, with their beaks apart and wings held away from their bodies. None of the forest-people were moving about save the Flies, and they were busy in the shady places. I had found a good place, and had decided to stay there for the day, but I hadn't been there very long when I heard some Person groaning. I looked about, and saw the Person lying on his back, with his face turned toward the skies. A tree-top shaded his face, but the rest of his body was in the sunshine. He groaned again, and as his hands moved above his head, I saw a swarm of Flies arise and circle about for a moment, then light on his face and head again. I watched for some time, and always, when the Person could stand the torment of the Flies no longer, he would groan and raise his hands to drive them away, and always they returned in a minute to bother him further.

"I crawled toward the Person, wondering

why he did not rise and go away from there, but, reaching his side, I saw he was in trouble. He had fallen and cut his head on a stone, and the blood that had flowed from the wound had covered his face and matted his hair. It was the blood that had called the Fly-people; they were there in thousands to torment the unfortunate Person on the ground.

"I crawled upon his breast and rushed among a swarm of Flies, but they escaped me. Then I sat still and waited for them to return, but only once did they come, and that time I caught and ate one of them before he could get away with the others. Still I waited, but no Flies would alight upon the Person any more, and he had ceased to groan and move his hands.

"He slept and I sat there near his chin, hoping in vain for the return of the swarm of Flies. I will tell the truth here. I had no thought of protecting the Person from the torment of the Fly-people. I was hungry and I had never seen so many Flies before. I thought that by

waiting patiently I might catch another, and that was my reason for staying on the Person's breast. But only one or two Flies ventured near while I was there.

"At last the Person awoke and sat up. Then I saw that it was *Old*-man.

"'Hello!' I said.

"He looked about for me, and I crawled out on his hand, so that he would discover me. 'Here I am!' I called.

"'Oh, hello, Brother Spider,' he answered, seeing me at last.

"'How did you get hurt?' I asked.

"'I was trying to get some of that red paint from that cliff,' he said, 'and the stone was rotten, or broken, and it gave way. I fell upon the rocks here and cut my head. The Fly-people have tormented me and I shall remember it. When I could not help myself they attacked me in thousands, and I suffered greatly under their crawling and biting. But they grew ashamed of their actions at last, and left me.'

"'No, you are mistaken, *Old*-man,' I replied. 'The Fly-people did not become ashamed of their treatment of you. It was I that drove them away. It was I that stayed on your breast near your chin and kept them from tormenting you while you rested.'

"'Is that true?' he asked.

"'Yes. It is true,' I answered, 'and I can do it again.'

"'Well, hide in my hair and I will lie down again. If the Fly-people return and you drive them away, I will know their hearts are not good toward me, the man that made them, and that you are truthful — that your tongue is not forked.'

"*Old*-man stretched himself upon the stony ground, and I hid in his hair as he had suggested. I was very still, for I hoped that if I proved what I had told him was true, he would do something for me that would make my life easier.

"It was quite a long time before any of the

Flies returned, and then only two came and settled upon *Old*-man's nose. I know they must have tickled his nose terribly, but he did not move, nor did I. I kept very still, hoping that others would come. And they did — hundreds, thousands of them, emboldened by the example of the first two, finally settled upon *Old*-man's face and head. Then I rushed upon them and they flew away — all save one, which I ate.

"'There, you see,' I said, after the Flies had gone. 'As long as I stay here they will not come back.' And they didn't, although *Old*-man did not move for ever so long.

"Finally he sat up. 'Where are you, Spider?' he called.

"'I 'm here, *Old*-man — right here in your hair, where you told me to hide,' I answered.

"'Well, come down here where I can see you,' he commanded, and I crawled to his hand.

"'You have a good heart,' he said, 'and I will reward you for what you have done for me

this day. Let me see, what do you live on? I have forgotten.'

"'Why, you told me to kill and eat Flies and such things. You said that the Fly-people would grow to be many — too many — unless I and others lived upon them, but they are too quick for me, and, although I do the best I can, I 'm always hungry.'

"'So you do — so you do live on the Fly-people, and I am glad of it, although I had forgotten it. I made so many people and told them what to do I forget sometimes,' he said, shaking his gray head. 'So you do. And now I will make you so that you can get a living easily. Come with me.'

"He rose, with me on his hand, and, with his old face covered with dry blood, he walked away into the forest. I wondered what he would do to make life easier for me, but he did not stop until he came to a high hill, which he climbed. He seated himself on its crest. 'Here we will rest,' he said, and was soon fast asleep.

It was nearly another day when he awoke and sat up. I was still on his hand. It was warm there in the night, and I had slept some in spite of my wondering.

"*Old*-man stood up, made a strange sign toward the east, and then went to a mountain-ash that was growing on the hillside. With its pretty leaves he began to weave a green basket with a tiny cover, and when he had finished he returned to the hilltop and again faced the east. At last the gray light began to creep to the hilltop, and I saw him reach out and take the first that came. It was a dull gray in color, and although it was scarcely visible I saw him put it into his green basket of ash-leaves with his magic fingers. Holding the green basket with his left hand, he made another sign toward the east, and at length the first golden beam of the sun's light fell upon the hilltop at his feet. He bent his head a moment, and then gently took a portion of that — just a tiny portion of the first golden gleam of the sunlight in the

fresh morning. 'Lend me of your light and strength, O Sunlight! Lend, that I may mend my clumsy work among my people,' he whispered. And then, with the bit of gray dawn and the tiny portion of golden sunlight, he went down the hill and into the forest again.

"He must have known exactly where he was going, for he travelled straight toward a large balsam fir-tree — the largest I had ever seen, straight and beautiful to see, with the bark smooth about its great trunk except for many blisters. *Old*-man broke one of the blisters with his finger-nail, and the crystal drops of sap hidden there fell into the opened basket of ash-leaves with the portion of early sunlight and gray dawn. He began to mix them thoroughly with his finger, pausing now and then to fan them with his hand that more of the morning air might enter and become a part of the mixture. Then, stirring in two drops of dew which he took from a forest flower, he bade me drink it, and I did — all that I could of it.

"While I was drinking he went to a black-haw bush and broke a thorn from one of its spiney branches, and returning commanded me to sleep. I do not know what he did with the thorn, for I felt no pain. But when I awoke there was a hole in my back and I suspected he had pricked the hole there with the thorn.

" 'Now,' said he, 'climb to that limb up yonder, and when you are there reach around and pull a thread out of that hole in your back. Then fasten its end to the limb.'

"I did as he told me. It only took a moment.

" 'Now let yourself down slowly,' he ordered.

"I began to lower myself, wondering at the strangeness of it all. Down, down I came, twisting a little and marvelling much. I expected to fall; but judge of my surprise when I saw a fine thread of silvery gray coming from my back as I lowered my body toward the ground.

" 'That 's it!' cried *Old*-man. 'That 's it! Now make a web like this,' and he drew a pat-

tern upon the ground with a stick. 'Make your webs like this, only fasten them between limbs or across open places. The Fly-people will not see them and they will become entangled in them. Then you can kill them and eat them when you are ready. The wind will help you, too. I have commanded it to help you set your traps when you ask it. Now you can live easily and I have paid you for your goodness to me. Kill many Flies — more than you need, for they are too many. Always remember me, for I need to be remembered. And now I will go to the river and wash the blood from my face,' he finished, leaving me.

"I set my first web-trap right away and caught five Flies that day! I've been setting them ever since and always shall — but I hate the Bear because he breaks them. That's my story."

CHAPTER IV

"AND it 's a good one," declared the Weasel, as the Spider finished. "I 've always wondered what your webs were made of, and I 'm glad to know. It is easy now to see why they are so light and beautiful, and no wonder, when one considers the material that *Old*-man used in making them. I, for one, shall be more careful in the future while travelling about and not break so many of your webs."

"Oh, it 's the Bear who causes me most of my trouble, and he doesn't care a rap," said the Spider. "I 'm glad that you liked my story and I 'm anxious to hear the others."

The Weasel put more wood and bark on the fire and when it had brightened said: "We have a number of Fly-catching people with us to-night, and, besides them, I think that the greatest thief alive is also here, but I shall ask

the Toad-person to tell us how he came to be so clever at making his living. He began to travel to this place ten days ago, and only reached here this morning, for he is a slow traveller. Brother Toad, will you be good enough to tell us your secret of Fly-catching and How It Came About that you possess it?"

"I 'd be delighted," replied the Toad, "but first I want to say that the Bear-person is detestable. He blunders along through the forests and up and down the banks of streams without caring who he steps on. I have to look out for him wherever I go. I wish something would happen to him, and I wish him bad luck as does the Spider. Now, about my Fly-catching. I couldn't always catch them so easily as I do now, but that 's the story, so I 'll commence at the very beginning.

"I was always a homely person and clumsy. Being one of the first people *Old*-man made, I wasn't so very well done — that is, I believe *Old*-man did better work after he had fashioned

me. Of course, I didn't know how to make my living after he made me, but he told me to catch the Flies and Bugs just as he told the Spider. But, good gracious! I couldn't catch a Fly in a week, although I sat still just as he told me to. He made me to look like — well, nothing much — and I knew that the Flies couldn't see me very well; they came close to me, even lit on me, but I couldn't catch them. Yet I sat still and waited just as *Old*-man had commanded until I was so weak from hunger that I almost died. That was how I learned to do without food so long, and I have never forgotten what I learned then. I can go for months without eating if I am obliged to do it, and I never eat in the winter-time. Life was very hard for me in those days and *Old*-man was so busy making other people that he forgot all about me until, one day in the summer when I was so poor and thin that I could scarcely crawl, I was waiting for Flies among some stones by the river when *Old*-man came

along and sat down on a large stone to watch me. His body cast a shadow across mine and I was glad of the shade for the sun was hot.

"'Say, Toad,' he said at last, 'you are thin. I made you to be a fat person. You must be lazy.'

"'No,' I told him, 'I am not lazy, but I cannot catch the Fly-people and I am starving. I 'll soon be dead if you do not help me.'

"Just then a Fly lighted upon *Old*-man's right hand and he caught it with his left. 'See! I can catch them,' he said. 'Eat this one.' He handed it to me, but when I tried to take it I fell over.

"'Stick out your tongue,' he said and I did stick out my tongue, but when he put the Fly upon it it fell to the ground.

"'That 's funny,' he mused. 'I hadn't made many people when I fashioned you, and I guess I made a mistake. Stick out your tongue again.'

"I did, and he grabbed it with his thumb

and finger. 'Oh!' I cried, but he pinched hard and began to swing me about his head in the air holding to the end of my tongue. Round and round he swung me until I was blind and dizzy. At last I lost consciousness and remembered nothing more until I found myself lying on my back among the stones with *Old*-man sitting beside me.

"'Get up!' he commanded, as soon as I opened my eyes to the light.

"I tried to get up, but stepped on my tongue, which was now as long as my body, and I fell down again.

"'Swallow your tongue first,' directed *Old*-man.

"I was sure I could never get my tongue back into my mouth. It was as long as I am, and the end that he had pinched so hard was flat and limber — so limber that it did not seem to belong to my tongue at all. However, I struggled to swallow it, and finally it disappeared, but it seemed to be much more than I needed.

'There,' I said, 'it 's down, but I can't speak plainly with it. I 've got too much tongue.'

"'I guess not,' he said. 'Take this Fly now.'

"I started to stick out my tongue so that he might put the dead Fly on it, but he cried: 'No—no! Snatch it! Grab it! Wind the flattened end of your tongue around it! Quick!'

"I snatched at the Fly in his finger. Out went the long tongue. The flat end curled around the Fly and was back in my mouth so swiftly that I didn't realize I had got the Fly until I felt it in my mouth.

"'That 's it!' cried *Old*-man, laughing. 'That 's the way, only faster! Faster! I 've fixed you! You can make your living now and look fat, as I intended you to be, always. Now sit still and catch a Fly. I have many things to do, but I shall not leave you until you can catch Flies.'

"I sat still, and in a little while a large Fly came buzzing around me. I snatched at him. 'Fine! Fine!' laughed *Old*-man. 'You are so

quick with that new tongue I didn't even see it; but you caught the Fly, and I am going to look after the other people now. I made a lot of mistakes that will have to be mended or my people will die. Good-by, and get fat,' he laughed, and left me.

"My tongue bothered me in speaking for a long time, but now I can talk plainly, and no Fly or Bug escapes me, if he comes within the length of my body from my mouth. That 's How It Came About."

CHAPTER V

"WE thank you, Brother Toad," said the Weasel, stirring the fire. "*Old*-man must have hurt you the day he pinched your tongue."

"He did," agreed the Toad. "Keep still a minute; here comes a Miller. Watch me catch him."

The Miller, attracted by the firelight, fluttered about and finally settled upon a stick in the wood-pile, too far from the Toad. But he hitched and wriggled closer until at last the Miller disappeared. There was a sound like the shutting of jaws — a satisfied click or smack, as the Toad's tongue returned to its place with its prey, but not one person around the fire had seen the tongue do its work. "There, that 's the way I make my living," said the Toad. "Now go ahead; fix your fire and I 'll listen to the others."

The Weasel piled bark upon the fire and then

said: "We have a queer person with us to-night — a person who digs in the ground under the snow in winter, and who is seldom seen by others. When the snow melts and is gone we see the curious, crooked ways he has made during the winter and wonder at them. Will the Bob-tailed Mole (Vole) tell us How It Came About that he lives as he does?"

The Bob-tailed Mole came to the fire. "I 'd get along well enough if it were not for the Bear. He is a mean person," he began. "Nobody here seems to like the Bear very much, and he is the terror of my life. I wish something bad would happen to him. *Old*-man made many enemies for me, but the Bear is the worst of them all; for not only does he dig my people out of their holes, but his keen nose tells him where they are.

"I have always lived as I am now living, only I had no pouches in which to carry the dirt which I dug, and once my tail was long, like that of my relations, the Mice-people. You

have often seen fine black dirt in little piles on the snow? Well, I do that. I make those piles with dirt that I dig under the snow. You see, I couldn't move about in my tunnels if I had no way to dispose of the dirt I dig in making them, so I carry it out in my pouches and dump it just as a miner does, and now I 'll tell you How It Came About.

"One day I was digging, but my tunnel was broken in many places because I was then obliged to pile the dirt behind me. Each pile shut off the tunnel, and made it necessary for me to begin a new one. Anybody could see just where I was, for each tunnel was little longer than my own body. I eat the roots of small plants and certain grasses that are under the ground, and I have many enemies besides the Bear, so I keep out of sight as much as I can. Well, on the day that I am telling you about, *Old*-man came along and saw me.

"'Hello!' he greeted, as I came out of the ground to begin another tunnel.

"'Good morning!' I replied.

"'You are not doing as I told you to do,' said *Old*-man. 'Keep under the ground! Keep under the ground! The Owl and the Hawk and lots of your enemies can see you if you work in this way.'

"'How can I keep under the ground?' I asked him. 'I dig and dig, just as you told me, but the dirt piles up behind me, and there is no room for me in the hole that I am digging. If I dig it larger there is only more dirt to bother me. What is there is there always, no matter how I work to make it different. If I cannot get rid of the dirt how can my body be in any hole? Tell me.'

"'Well, well, well!' he said. 'I didn't think of that. I put the dirt where it is, and unless it is moved away nothing can take its place, of course. Come here.'

"I went to him, wondering what he intended to do to help me, and he waved his hand over me four times. Then a numbness came upon

me. It was as though I were asleep or dead, only I could see and understand what he was doing. He took a sharp piece of flint from his girdle and cut two slits in my skin, one on either side of my neck near my face. These he made smooth with a peeled stick from a bush of red willow that grew near by. He kept talking as he worked, and I could hear him and understand. There was no pain, and his fingers moved swiftly. 'Fill these two pouches with the dirt that you dig,' he said. 'And when they are full come out and unload them; empty them with your front feet, using the left foot to empty the right pouch, and the right foot to unload the left pouch.' I wondered how I could do that, but could not speak nor move. 'Your tail — that must be a nuisance in digging and in turning around in your tunnels,' he continued. It was a nuisance, but I liked my tail, and would have told him that if I could have spoken; but the numbness was even upon my tongue, so that no words would come to it.

'Yes,' he went on, talking more to himself than to me, 'that tail is another of my mistakes. I 'll cut it off.' I wanted to cry out, but couldn't, and he pinched off my tail with his finger-nails, leaving only a stub half as long as the tails of my relations, the Mice-people. 'You should be darker in color,' he said, 'for you live where the dirt is black. Be blacker!' — and I became the color of black dirt. 'Wake!' he cried.

"And then my blood began to circulate again. I felt no pain, and stood upon my feet. 'Go now and dig. Fill your pouches and let me see you unload them before I leave you. I am busy mending my mistakes in creation,' he said.

"I dug and filled my pouches with the black dirt that is upon the surface of the forest lands, and when they were full I came out of the hole I had made as he bade me. I began to empty the left pouch with the right front foot just as he had commanded. 'Faster! faster!' cried

Old-man. 'Make your foot go fast,' and I did. I made it go so fast that *Old*-man couldn't see it moving. 'That 's the way!' he laughed. 'Now you 'll get along easily and be able to hide from your enemies who do not use their noses but depend upon their eyes to find you. Now you can dig the ground in the winter-time under the snow, for you can carry the dirt up through it, and empty your pouches when no one is looking. Good-by. I am a busy Person.'

"That 's How It Came About," finished the Bob-tailed Mole. "I 'm glad the Bear isn't here," he added. "He bothers me in the summer-time. He is always digging roots and often finds my people in his digging. His nose is keen — too keen to suit me, and if he were with us to-night I would suspect him of evil designs."

CHAPTER VI

THE Weasel walked to the fire which had burned down to a few coals and put some fresh fuel upon it. "Thank you, brother," he said. "Your story explains those piles of black dirt which I have seen upon the snow in winter. I don't dislike the Bear-person, myself, but it seems that the rest of you about this fire look upon him with disfavor."

There was a murmur of assent among those present at the Council, and hearing it the Weasel glanced knowingly toward the thick patch of ferns, for he knew the Bear had heard every word. "It will teach him to be truthful," he thought. "I will now call upon the Mountain Rat, the greatest thief I know," he said aloud. "Let him tell us how he came to be so industrious in his thieving, and How It Came About that he steals so many things which he cannot use."

The fire burned up brightly, fanned by a gentle breeze, so that its light reached almost to the thick patch of ferns. The Mountain Rat, his whiskers showing plainly in the firelight, walked to a spot near the blaze when ——

"Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" the deep voice of the Great Horned Owl came from a tree-top over the fire. There was a scampering of the people and a hush fell upon the Council Ground. Only the sighing of the breeze in the bushes and the crackle of the Weasel's fire could be heard. Not a person was in sight.

"Coog — Coog-a-noots — Sto-kay!" called the Owl, again.

"O my!" whispered the Bob-tailed Mole, "I do wish I hadn't come here."

"So do I," replied the Flying Squirrel, as he crawled under a log with the Mole.

"Say, Brother Owl!" called the Weasel, gathering his courage and returning to his fire, "I wish you'd go away from here. We are

holding a Council, and I 've always been a friend of yours."

"Oh, hello," said the Owl. "If you are holding a Council I 'll go away. One tree is as good as another to me, but I saw your fire and thought I 'd investigate. I can see some things from here that you can't, Brother Weasel."

"Yes, I suppose you can, but never mind — never mind, and go away, please," urged the Weasel.

"All right, if you know about it," laughed the Owl, and he went away.

"There!" cried the Weasel. "Come from your hiding-places, brothers! The Owl-person will not come back."

They came slowly and fearfully into the firelight, and the Weasel piled more bark upon the blaze. "Now, Brother Mountain Rat," he said, "go on with your story."

"Well, first I want to correct an impression," began the Mountain Rat. "I do *not* steal for the love of stealing, as the Weasel has said. I

steal because I am obliged to, as I shall show you. I do not claim to be anything but a thief and a social outcast, but there are people here about this fire that are not much better than I. There's that Spider-person, for instance. The Weasel has spoken of her beautiful webs and the strange powers possessed by the Spider, but neither our brother the Weasel nor the Spider, in telling How It Came About, told us that the Spiders are cannibal-people. The women Spiders always eat their husbands. Maybe you don't know that, but it 's true! I 'm rather bad, I know, but there are others besides myself who possess ways that should condemn them socially. Now I don't like many people and hardly any care for me, but I shall tell you How It Came About that I am a thief.

"It was a still day in the fall. In the clear streams every tree was reflected sharply. Alder and quaking-aspen leaves which had fallen were sailing about on the waters in the breeze, their gay colors flashing like the wings of Butter-

flies. *Old*-man had warned us of the coming winter by painting the leaves of the trees and bushes. The grass had changed its color, too, and the nights were growing colder. The ducks and the geese were beginning to travel toward the South and every lake was filled with them at night. Everybody had seen and recognized the sign of the summer's death — the sign *Old*-man told us he would make before the winter came.

"I wasn't a thief then. I had found a cave in the rocks of mountain, and had gathered food for the winter as I had been told to do by *Old*-man when he made me. I was happy, having nothing to do except to watch the change that was coming upon the world as winter approached. The days were so bright and beautiful, and the nights so starlit and still, that I could not believe snow would come to cover all the land, or that the ice would soon close all the lakes and lazy streams.

"I was standing on a dead tree by a river

looking at my own reflection in the water when suddenly a great form blotted it out. I turned to flee in fright. 'Stop!' commanded a voice. It was *Old*-man, and I stopped, of course.

"'I have not seen you since I made you, brother,' he said. 'How are you getting along?'

"'Wonderfully well,' I told him. 'My winter's food is all gathered, and I have built my nest in a deep cave in the rocks of a mountain as you told me to do.'

"'What are you doing now?' he asked suspiciously.

"'Nothing at all. I am watching the change that is coming, and learning things from the days and nights.'

"'I am afraid I made things too easy for you, brother,' he said, and turned and left me there by the river.

"I was glad he was gone, for I did not want him to change life for me. I had returned to the fallen tree to look at my shadow in the water once more when I heard *Old*-man coming toward

me again. I sat still — very still. I hoped he would pass without noticing me, but he did not. Instead he came to my side and bending low whispered in my ear: 'Gather Whawhahe — lots of it. You will need to be busy.' He was laughing and his eyes were dancing with glee. 'Remember, Whawhahe,' he said again, and I felt his breath deep in my ear.

"'Wait, wait, *Old*-man!' I cried, for he had turned to go away again, and I didn't know Whawhahe — had never seen it nor even smelled it. 'Tell me, what *is* Whawhahe, *Old*-man?' I begged. 'I would not know it if I saw it.' But he kept on, his laugh ringing in my ears.

"'Find it!' he called back from a thicket of fir-trees. 'Find it and pile it high, for some day I shall visit your lodge, and if you have gathered no Whawhahe, I will surely make trouble for you — ha, ha, ha!'

"Then he was gone. Even the Echo-people, who had begun at once to play with his laugh, had lost it among the big trees, and I turned

away to where only the water, rippling against a stone near the river's bank, was making a sound.

"I was sad. My heart was on the ground. 'How can I ever be happy again?' I wondered. Just then the Beaver came along, and I called to him. 'Wait, brother! I am in trouble and you are wise. Tell me, what is Whawhahe?' But he laughed. 'You 're a crazy-person,' he said; 'I never heard of Whawhahe' — and he went on down the river. Then I asked the feathered thief, the Magpie, but he too only laughed and flew higher among the branches of a tree, as though to rid himself of my company.

"When night came I was far from my lodge. I had wandered without realizing where I was going, for I was troubled. *Old*-man might visit my lodge any day — any night. I must find some Whawhahe and I didn't know what it looked like, smelled like, or tasted like. So I began at once taking everything I could carry to my lodge in the cave, hoping that some of it

— any of it — might be Whawhahe, and that when he visited me *Old*-man would find it and not make trouble for me.

"I have never found a single person who knows what Whawhahe is, but I steal everything, no matter where I find it, because I am afraid that I may not have Whawhahe in my pile of supplies when *Old*-man comes, and he 'll surely come some day. It has kept me busy — made me a thief and gatherer of things I do not want. I discover new things almost every night and carry them to my lodge in the cave. I 'm doing my best to find that strange thing which nobody knows or ever heard of, and that 's why I am a thief. Judge me, now that I have told you How It Came About.

"Before I sit down to listen to the others, however, I want to say that I agree with those who have spoken before me. The Bear is a nuisance. He persists in spending the winter in caves that I have selected for myself. Then, when he comes in, I have to move. I wish that

something terrible would happen to the Bear, and if ——"

The Mountain Rat got no farther. There was a crackling in the bushes, and a scattering of the small people about the fire, and the great body of the Bear rushed from the thick patch of ferns.

Plump! went the Toad into the creek, and plump! the Turtle slid in after him. "*I* didn't say a word against him, anyhow," he whispered to the Toad, as they swam down-stream together.

"Well, *I* did, and I meant it, every word," returned the Toad. "Nobody likes the Bear-person."

The Flying Squirrel, who had expected the Weasel to call on him next, fled in terror, climbing a tall tree, and jumping from its top to sail to another, falling gradually in his flight until he landed safely upon the trunk near the ground. Then up he climbed, jumped again, and so on until he was far away from the Council Ground.

"Mercy!" he breathed at last. "I wonder if they all got away."

Of course there was nobody in sight when the Bear reached the fire. Everybody had run away; and, being small people, they could hide easily. He was angry. His ears had burned since the beginning of the story-telling, for he had heard no good spoken of himself. Curiosity had urged him to hold his temper until the Mountain Rat, whom everybody despised, spoke. "That 's all I can stand," he growled, and, crashing through the bushes, he charged the Council, to punish the people there. But all was quiet. Only the tiny fire made a sound, and, as though deriding him for his show of ill-temper, blazed brighter. He struck the pile of dry wood with his great paw, and sent the sticks and bits of birch bark flying in all directions. Then, with an angry snarl, he aimed a blow at the fire itself, and there was a shower of sparks, a cloud of smoke, and the burning brands sailed through the darkness into the

forest, where there were dry twigs and leaves in dangerous quantities. All was black dark on the Council Ground, where the Bear, scratching the earth in his anger, searched for the forest-people who had spoken against him. But suddenly he saw the reflection of a light behind him, and turned. Deep in a thicket a tiny blaze had kindled. It was growing brighter and crackling sharply as it began to spread with the rising wind. He trembled with fear, turning first one way and then another, bewildered. "O my! Look at that!" he whimpered, when the blaze, reaching higher and higher among the bushes, sent its hot tongue to catch the boughs of a small fir-tree. There was a blinding flash and a roar. The flames licked the inflammable needles from every limb, and sent red sparks dancing in a cloud of black smoke toward the sky.

"Oh, now what have I done! What have I done!" he wailed.

"You 've set the forest afire. That 's what

Then, with an angry snarl, he aimed a blow at the fire itself

you 've done," said the Weasel, in an awed voice, from the end of a hollow log. "You 've set the forest afire, you big lout."

The Bear rushed into the thicket and began to trample the blaze. "Help me, Brother Weasel," he begged. "Don't let those little sticks burn."

But the Weasel was already busy. He was tossing the small sticks into the fire, clearing the ground about the thicket of all leaves and twigs. The Bob-cat came to help. So did the Owl, who had seen the fire start, and they all worked hard to save the forest.

"Oh, I 'm burned!" groaned the Bear, limping toward the creek when the last smouldering ember was dead. "My feet are blistered terribly."

"Serves you right," said the Bob-cat. "You might have burned the forest if we had not helped you. What will *Old*-man say when he hears about it?"

"Don't tell him! Please don't tell him!"

begged the Bear. "I 'm punished enough. Just look at my feet" — and he sat down and held up a blistered paw.

The Weasel laughed.

"That 's right, laugh!" snarled the Bear, starting again for the water. "Laugh!"

"I wasn't laughing at your burns," said the Weasel, following after him. "I was laughing at — oh, laughing because your friend on the other side of the Mountain will be wondering where you are — that 's all," he finished.

"What friend?" snapped the Bear, forgetting that he had told the Weasel he was expected on the other side of the Mountain that night.

"O land, I don't know what friend," grinned the Weasel. "From what I heard the people say to-night I am wondering if you have *any* friends."

"Is that so?" sneered the Bear, stepping into the water.

"Say!" cried the Weasel, changing the subject, "I thought you were afraid of fire."

"I am — terribly," groaned the Bear, rolling in the water. "What 's good for burns?"

"Mud," said the Owl, "mud."